LEGION OUTPOST

No. 10 Spring, 1981 $2.50

GALLOPING GALAXIES --

-- Has it been five years already?

It sure has, I have to admit with no small measure of embarrassment. Just a tad over five years ago, **The Legion Outpost** #9 was published. Back then, Carmine Infantino was the publisher of National Periodical Publications; Murray Boltinoff was editing the comic known officially at the time as, simply, **Superboy**; Jim Shooter and Cary Bates were chronicling the adventures of the Legion in that book's pages; I was a fresh-out-of-college copy editor at an upstate New York newspaper, living in the wilds of a hamlet improbably named Bullville; Mike Flynn, who fathered Legion fandom at the tender age of 13 with his letter in **Superboy** #182, had just left the Bronx for college . . . and, well, gee, looking back now, it all seems like ancient history.

Since then, Infantino has gone full circle and is drawing the Flash again, for a company called DC Comics Inc.; now the Legion has gone through three more editors and is welcoming aboard Len Wein and Mike Barr; it's gone through two more regular writers and now is welcoming aboard Roy Thomas; I'm living in the winter warmth of Fort Lauderdale now and giving the thrice-over to stories written for the *Miami Herald*; Mike Flynn's college days have come and gone and he's now working for an advertising agency in Manhattan . . . and, well, gee, that's only scratching the surface.

So what happened to the **Outpost** in the meantime . . . and why, after all this time, do you find yourself reading the tenth issue of this mythically quarterly fanzine? Good question. Sit back, and I'll give you the nickel tour of five years' worth of Legion fandom history.

Actually, it goes back further than that. For reasons best left to some fannish historian of the future to figure out, the rise of Legion fandom in the early 1970s was a phenomenon unmatched by any that preceded it, with the possible exception of Batman fandom during the early- and mid-1960s, which was nurtured by Biljo White and his classic fanzine, **Batmania**. Similarly, **The Legion Outpost** united hundreds of fans during the years when the Legion was locked in the clutches of, first, obscurity, when it hadn't a book to call its own, and then, mediocrity, after it took over **Superboy** and the dust had settled from the initial rush of Dave Cockrum's and Cary Bates' fresh, if sometimes misdirected, interpretation of Our Favorite Series. Letters and phone calls flew among the **Outpost**'s principal contributors, and friendships were sealed between them and other Legion enthusiasts—friendships that, in many cases, came to owe less to the common denominator of Legion fandom and comic books than to the simple affinity for like minds outside the fannish context. For better or worse, the **Outpost** was no longer the cornerstone of our friendships, and it slid, bit by bit, down our priority lists.

Nevertheless, **Outpost** #9 was published in late 1975. And it was followed, six months later, by the creation of a publishing alliance called **Interlac**, after the *lingua franca* of the Thirtieth Century. In a sense, **Interlac** was a communal fanzine; all of its members—15 at first, a number that soon grew to 50—contributed their own informal mini-zines to Interlac's bimonthly mailings. It didn't take long for it to become clear that, like it or not, **'Lac** had become the **Outpost**'s successor. The first mailing, all 26 pages of it, was sent out in June, 1976, by organizer Rich Morrissey, whose name's surely familiar to those of you who pored over the DC lettercols of the early '70s and who—It's A Small World Dept.—revived **Batmania** and published it for a while a few years ago. Amazingly enough, given the precedent of the **Outpost**'s intermittent publishing "schedule," **Interlac** has come out on time, every two months, ever since—and more than 10,000 pages have gone out under its covers during that time.

And alas, the **Outpost** fell by the wayside. There were several serious attempts to put out the tenth issue during those years; one was begun three years ago—and we almost made it. The lineup of articles, art, and stories was all set, culled primarily from contributions received during the months after #9 appeared. But when the contributors were told their material would finally be seeing print, almost to a person they wanted to revise and/or polish and/or update them. And, softie that I am, I put off doing any of the nitty-gritty work on the issue until the new versions arrived. Which, oh, one or two really did. When the time came at last to say to hell with the laggards and proceed anyway, though, the moment had passed. I was deeply involved in **Interlac** as its central mailer by then, and the extra time just wasn't available.

About a year later, Mike Flynn resolved to get out #10 once and for all. With mixed emotions dominated by a guilty sense of relief, I packed up all the usable **Outpost** material I had, shipped it off to Mike and wished him luck. I think that was around the time Mike started to discover girls or something, though, and the upshot was predictable: No **Outpost**. Not just then.

But this time, it's for real. This time, obviously, it's been done. And there are a number of people to thank for that, especially Jay Zilber and Ken Gale. Both had been associated with the **Outpost** almost from the start, Jay as a tireless contributor and Ken as salesman supreme and behind-the-scenes friend. They're the ones who concocted the plan to get this issue out, not only for its own sake, but also as a challenge.

You see, two days ago, they telephoned me with their proposal: Let's build an **Outpost** from the ground up and get it into everyone's hands as quickly as humanly possible. I liked the idea, other folks liked the idea, and already we've reassembled much of the **Outpost** staff to produce this issue, with a few new names added for good measure. Virtually all of the material in this issue is fresh, done on strict deadline for editing at my end and production work by Jay in New York. Too many opportune moments slipped away during the past five years because of loose scheduling. Now, another moment is upon us, we're all up for the project, and we're not going to let this one fade away.

Still and all, we have to be realistic. This will be the last issue of **The Legion Outpost**. There's no telling when we'd be able to publish a hypothetical #11, and there's no point in making any more promises that we might not be able to keep. And Lord knows, your subscription money has been tied up in the **Outpost**'s bank account for far too long as it is. Once we determine who's still reachable by way of their five-year-old addresses or forwarding addresses, we'll ship out your long-overdue refunds for the balance of your subscriptions.

But while this is the **Outpost**'s last issue, it's not its last gasp. That'll come in another couple months or so with the publication of the final **Outpost Bulletin**, which will be sent to you free with refunds. (Or, if no refund is due you, write to the address below for mail-ordering information if the inclination strikes.) The **Bulletin** will include the final accounting of the **Outpost**'s finances and, more important, your letters of comment, not only on this issue but also on any pertinent topic that you'd care to talk about.

Over the years, Legion fandom may have lost some of its broadly-based cohesiveness—but out of the blue, here's another **Outpost**. And, let's face it, the Gerry Conway Legion hasn't exactly been worth publishing a fanzine about—but out of the blue, it might just be on the verge of something great again with Roy Thomas at the helm. If the new year can get off to such an improbable start, who's to say what might come next? Maybe you can say. Send us your letters, in care of me at 566 NE 20th Street, Apt. 9, Fort Lauderdale, Florida 33305.

Thanks for your patience, gang. Enjoy this issue—and Long Live the Legion!

Harry Broertjes
December 26, 2980

The Legion Outpost . . .

. . . is published once every five years (no use kidding ourselves) by Harry C. Broertjes, 566 NE 20th Street, Apt. 9, Fort Lauderdale, Florida 33305. That makes five different addresses in five consecutive issues; shall we go for six? Issue #10, Little Brother Press Publication #125 (and a WPCzine to boot!).

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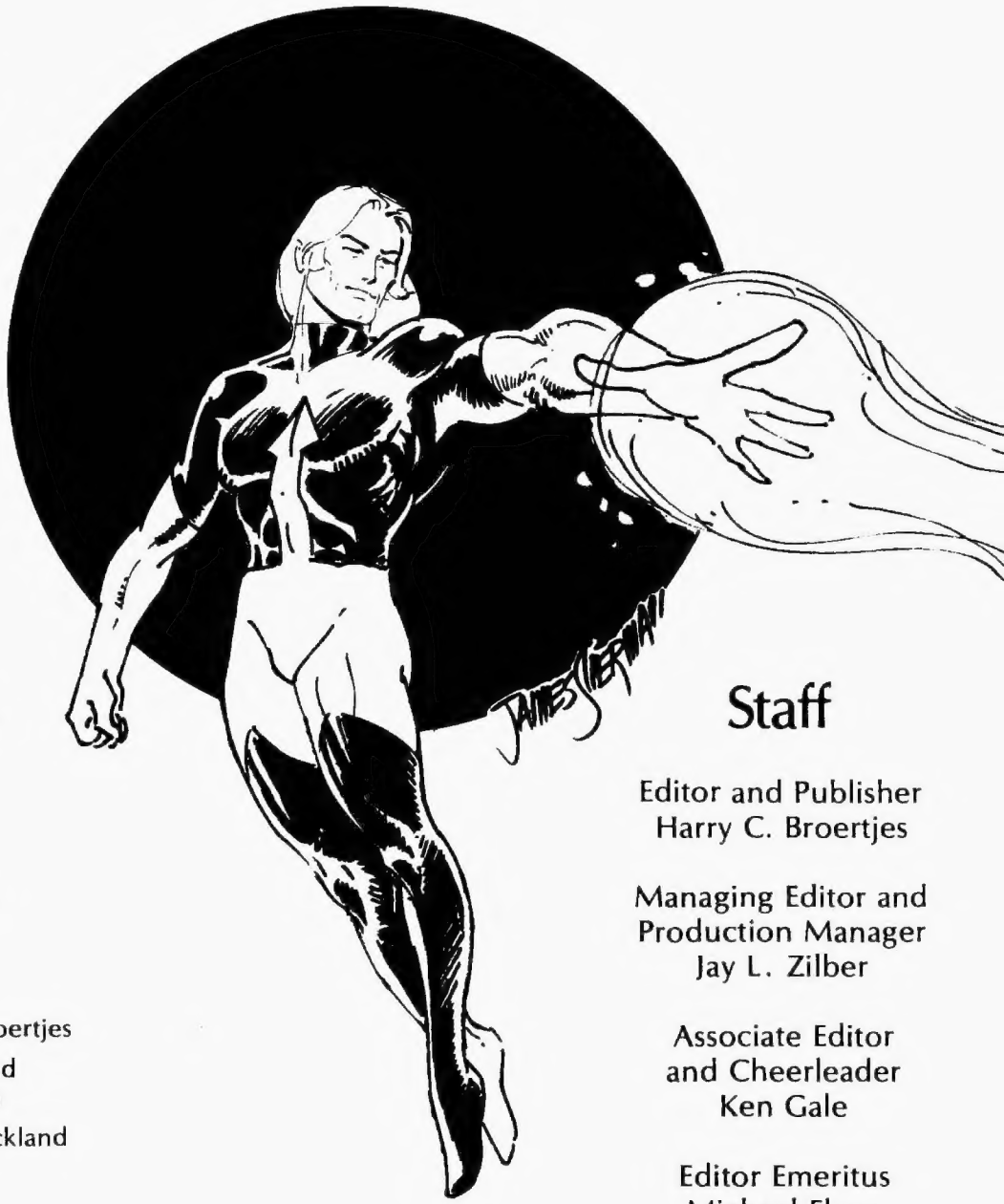

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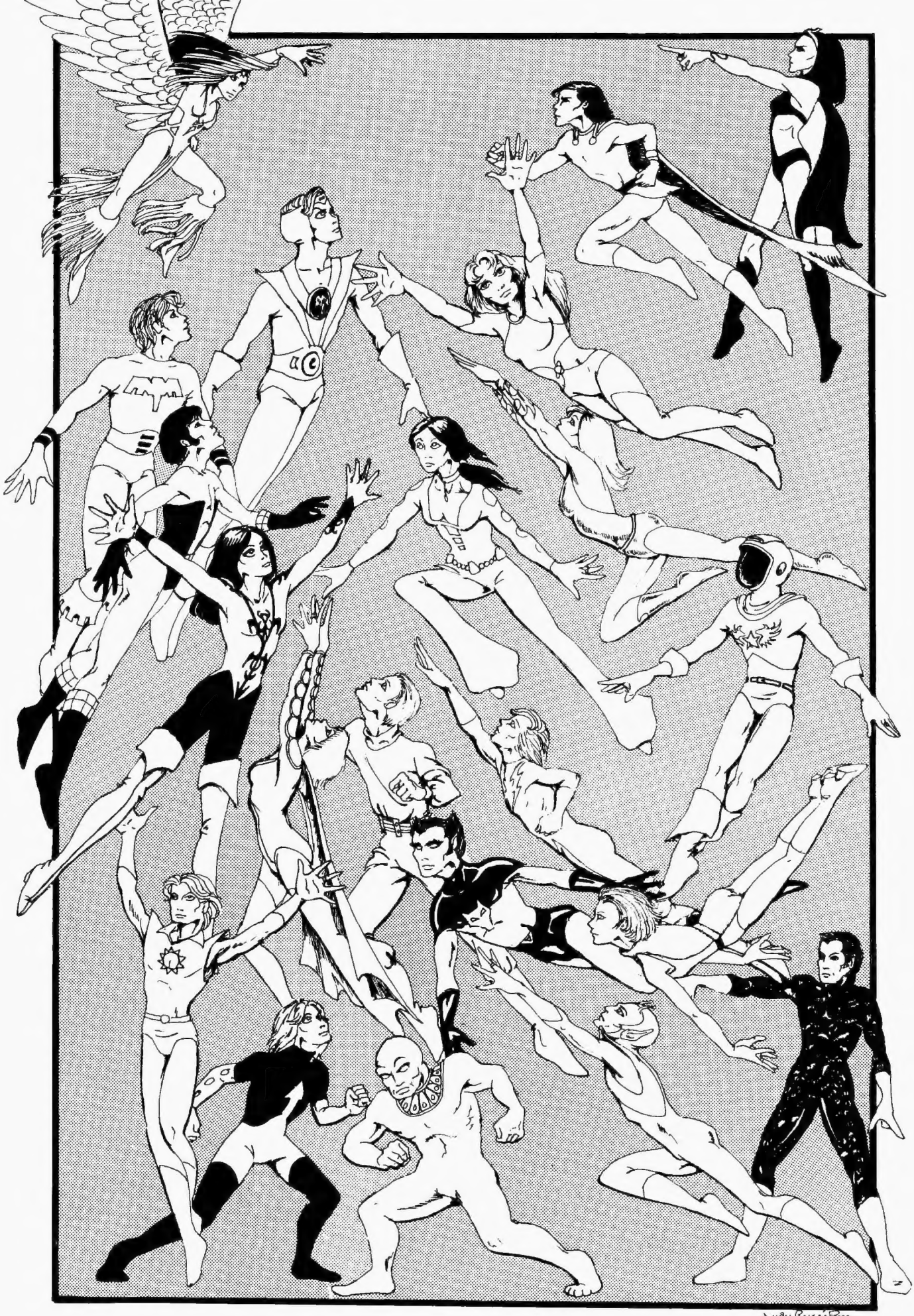
Our cover: Just in time for his forthcoming return in **Legion of Super-Heroes** #280, the Time Trapper taunts the most powerful Legionnaires from behind his Iron Curtain of Time, as depicted by DC artist Bob Smith. Bacover: Embellished by Andy Mushynsky over a Jim Shooter sketch, this is a fantasy that could just *never* happen to the Legion. . .

A limited number of copies of the dated (but historically fascinating) **Legion Outpost #9** are still available, at $1.50 a copy. Interviews with Mort Weisinger and Rod Reed; Otto Binder Memorial; speculations by Len Rosenberg; commentary by Margie Spears Bratt; fashions by Mike Flynn; Curt Swan cover; and the most interesting letter column ever published. Go for 'em while they last!

Quantity Rates: Please inquire. No advertising or subscriptions. Unsolicited literary and artistic contributions are discouraged at this time; contact us in 1986 and we'll let you know what's in the works.


Judy Renee Hope
FEB. MVI

LEGION OUTPOST
No. 10 Spring, 1981

For the record . . .

By JAY ZILBER and HARRY BROERTJES

The last copies of Roy Thomas' first **Legion of Super-Heroes** story had barely rolled off the presses when word came that Thomas, the Legion's ninth "permanent" scripter, would leave the series to take over Wonder Woman's book with another DC Comics newcomer, artist Gene Colan.

Thomas' replacement — for the time being, anyway — is former Legion writer and current DC Business Manager Paul Levitz, who returns in **Legion of Super-Heroes** #281 with the script — over Thomas' plot — for *Madness of the Molecule Master*, a continuation of the extended storyline that began in **Legion of Super-Heroes** #277.

At the same time, Legion neo-Editor Mike Barr was seeking replacements for artist Jimmy Janes and inker Bruce Patterson, both of whom wanted to leave the series because, said Barr, "It takes so long for them to draw the Legion that it's hard for them to make any money doing it."

All of which was a continuation of the creative turnover on the Legion's book that began in late 1980, when scripter Gerry Conway swapped assignments with then-Batman writer Thomas. That switch was followed, in early 1981, with the transfer of Legion Editor Jack Harris to a non-editorial position in DC's Export Division.

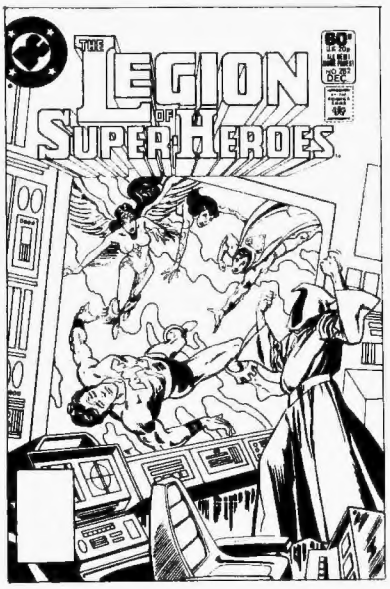
Len Wein was to have become the Legion's new editor. But a shift in DC policy dropped the book suddenly into the lap of Barr, who was to work under Wein's supervision. While Wein's name never appeared in the credits, he and Barr worked together closely on the book during the first few months of 1981.

Meanwhile, Patterson replaced Dave Hunt as the Legion's inker. And for a time, the dust seemed to have settled.

But then came Thomas' abrupt departure in April. "Roy has wanted to do Wonder Woman for years and years," Barr said. "It wasn't that he disliked the Legion at all. In fact, he'd grown to like the Legion and the characters."

Thomas was totally responsible for only two Legion scripts — possibly three, depending on his commitments. He wrote issues 277 and 278 over Conway plots, those issues featuring the formal introduction of Reflecto, a character previously seen — and only *seen*, until then — on the cover of **Adventure Comics** #354.

Thomas then flew solo on issues 279 (*Castle Grimbor Must Fall*) and 280 (*Oh! Call Back Yesterday!*, featuring Superboy's return to the Legion). Levitz was to script issues 281 and 282 over Thomas' plots.



Legion of Super-Heroes #282 © 1981 DC Comics Inc.

Issue 283, a previously planned fill-in story recapping and amplifying Wildfire's origin, was plotted by Thomas and might still be scripted by him, Barr said. The issue was drawn by Howard Bender.

Beginning with **Legion of Super-Heroes** #284, Levitz is slated to be the Legion's "permanent" writer — at least, as permanent as anything can be expected to be in comics these days, Barr said.

Superboy was to become a semi-regular character once again in the title that once carried his name. "We won't force him into the stories just for the sake of using him," Barr said. But he conceded Superboy's presence won't hurt the book's sales, which slid a bit after the Boy of Steel departed and the Legion took over in name as well as in fact.

In other Legion news:

- A 48-page **Legion of Super-Heroes** Dollar Comic is planned to mark the title's 300th issue. Ideas for the issue, due on sale in early 1983, were being discussed two years ahead of time, but no firm plans were made.
- DC letterer Gaspar Saladino has designed a new Legion logo built around the "L" symbol on the Legion's headquarters. The logo has a three-dimensional look, Barr said — and he emphasized that it in no way resembles the **X-Men**-swipe it replaced.

★ ★ ★

For an in-depth look at the directions in which the Legion's peripatetic staff planned to guide the series, just turn to the Roy Thomas interview, beginning on the next page, and the **Outpost's** discussion with Mike Barr and Len Wein, beginning on Page 14.

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THE ROY THOMAS INTERVIEW

Though his first Legion scripts are only just now beginning to appear, the Legion of Super-Heroes owes a long-standing debt to Roy Thomas. Along with Stan Lee, Roy developed and refined the basic style of Marvel Comics, the style which so deeply influenced Jim Shooter and Mort Weisinger in their approach to the Legion from 1966 to 1969—a period that still stands as the Legion's prime.

Twelve years later, Roy Thomas has come to DC to write the Legion himself. In a telephone conversation with **The Legion Outpost**, Roy discussed his forthcoming plans and early impressions of the Legion . . . and of Legion fandom.

Conducted and Transcribed by
KEN GALE
January 2, 1981

OUTPOST: How did you happen to become the writer on the Legion?

ROY THOMAS: It was a strange situation. I had told DC that I really didn't want to do the major characters, like Superman or Batman, if I could avoid it. I've done a couple of Batman issues, and specials here and there, but I didn't want to write those books regularly because I didn't like the idea of writing for characters that a lot of other people were also writing. I prefer, as I have with Conan and other books in recent years at Marvel, to be handling characters almost exclusively, excepting maybe a couple of guest appearances. When I was writing the Hulk, no one else was writing the Hulk. That way I didn't have to keep checking with other people on what they're doing with him.

OUTPOST: But why the Legion, specifically?

THOMAS: I think Gerry Conway kiddingly offered it to me, knowing that since it has 20-something members, I would probably hate the idea. I told him it might be a possibility some time, but at that particular time we were more seriously discussing the possibility of my taking on Wonder Woman, a character near and dear to my heart. But Gerry decided that since sales had gone up on Wonder Woman recently with some new changes he'd made in the magazine, maybe it might be better if we just waited for a while. About a week or two later, at a party of his, Gerry suddenly mentioned, "Well, what about the Legion?" Was I still interested? Suddenly it occurred to me that I really would rather do that than Batman, even though the other main Batman writer would be Gerry himself. So I decided to take it on as a kind of a challenge.

To date, I've dialogued two of Gerry's issues—the first two parts of the Reflecto series. And I've plotted my first issue, although I changed almost entirely what Gerry had in mind with Reflecto. Of course I'm aware that Reflecto, rather interestingly, was only featured once before, on a cover, and very obscurely inside that issue. I did something different than what that appearance foreshadowed because there was no way I could work in the Molecule Master reference. Gerry had said he intended to keep Reflecto around for a long time.

OUTPOST: Right. The Adult Legion story didn't say how soon after his introduction he would die in battle with the Molecule Master.

THOMAS: I'm not ignoring that. I intend to deal with that in the near future issues. I'm just going to do something a little different with Reflecto at the present time.

OUTPOST: So you are going to try to work around the adult story?

THOMAS: I know that Jack Harris had some plans. I was looking forward to working on the book with Jack, because he always had a lot of story ideas and directions. I know that he wanted to do a story which would negate those adult Legion appearances. Now, whether we'll do that or not I don't know. So far, Len and Mike let me just go ahead and plot this one story, but we haven't really had a conference on much of anything yet; Len got handed all these extra books and Mike is new, and things have been in a furor because this has all happened over the holidays, so the last few weeks have not been a very good time for us to discuss the future direction of the book. They did want to bring back Superboy on a bit more regular basis. They felt that the book had suffered a little bit without Superboy being in it. I haven't seen any sales figures so I don't know if I agree with that interpretation. I don't think that anybody is looking for Superboy to come back in on a full-time basis, but he will be popping up soon.

OUTPOST: One midwest distributor believes that sales went down specifically because Jimmy Janes took over the art.

THOMAS: I'd have to look at the figures before I could say. I think that Jimmy Janes is a reasonably good artist. He's new; he hasn't been drawing as long as some of the other artists who'd worked on the strip before him. I think that there are ways in which Len and Mike and I need to shake him up, to push him a little bit to do the work that we feel he's capeable of doing. But I think he has the basic ability to do the book.

Now, whether the book's sales went down when he took it over, I haven't the slightest idea. Certainly, you'd be able to figure out whether it was that or Superboy leaving because those things didn't happen together. Superboy left with the first issue that it became officially **Legion of Super-Heroes**. Janes didn't start drawing it until somewhat later. But sometimes it's hard to tell anyway. As a person who's been the editor of an entire comics company myself, I know you can't always tell what is the factor that makes something sell or not sell. It's hard to pin down. I couldn't do it without a thorough study, so I don't know if Len and Mike are right. They may be right and they may be not right. Who knows?

There are a lot of things that I really like about the Legion of Super-Heroes, and there are a number of things I don't exactly like. I thought it would be a challenge to write the book, but not in order to change all of those things. The characters have these strange, corny names, like the "Cosmic Boy" type of thing. But that's a part of the charm of the strip. And they're only *relatively* corny. I mean, Superman is a corny name, too. So are a lot of names.

OUTPOST: Mr. Fantastic . . .

THOMAS: Yeah, that's what I mean. The Lass, Girl, Boy, Lad endings and so forth. There's something a little strange about them, and yet I found it kind of appealing.

OUTPOST: Every Legion fan has been wondering what it'll be like when Roy Thomas does the book.

THOMAS: Well, first of all, you have to remember that I'm not even the editor. And secondly, of course, we'll be using the same artist as before. I don't imagine that there'll be any fantastic, sweeping changes in the book.

OUTPOST: To what degree will you be collaborating with Mike Barr?

THOMAS: Well, you know he only came to work for DC a few weeks ago, so not very much yet. When he came in, I was already plotting #279 and writing #277. I don't really know what the relationship is going to be.

But I'd like to stay on the book as long as I'm allowed a lot of freedom with it. Not because I want to change things that terribly much; I want to feel my way along with it for a few issues. I'm not looking to make a lot of radical changes except that I would like the book to look more like the future, somehow. In the last couple of years, it hasn't really looked much like a book which has a science fiction background as it had when, say, Jim Sherman was drawing some of his rare issues . . . or the stuff by Mike Grell or Dave Cockrum, both of whom gave it a science fiction feel. Jimmy Janes is more of a straight super-hero artist who can draw good figures, but I think in some ways he would be more at home drawing a contemporary strip. In order to draw a future strip like the Legion, there's got to be a broad, comprehensive overview of what the future looks like, whether it's original or amalgamated from different sources. I think that this is where Grell and Cockrum and Sherman really had everything going for them. They had a view of what the future ought to look like: The sleek, technological vision, like the old magazines from the 1930s and the 1940s would always show as what the future was going to look like after World War II.

OUTPOST: Interesting you should mention that. The Grell and Cockrum issues you mentioned were edited by Murray Boltinoff, and his point of view was that the science fiction aspects of the strip should be kept to an almost incidental, minimal background to the strip.

THOMAS: Oh, I *do* think they should be kept in the background. Otherwise, you're constantly going to be overtaken by them. It's one of the things that appealed to me about the strip. Although it's set technologically 1000 years in the future, the strip is almost contemporary in its social setting. The slangs that they use are more or less contemporary; there's been no attempt to try to give it a futuristic shine in that way. That's why it's always been such a strange strip, I guess.

What was begun more than 20 years ago, as an offshoot of Superboy and Superman, was done on a very juvenile basis, because it was part of the Superman group of magazines. And Mort Weisinger believed in keeping things very simple and very basic. That was his audience. Nowadays, *Star Wars* and all these science fiction things have made a larger mass young audience aware of science fiction. But even before that, the comics readers who supported the Legion were, I think, a little more sophisticated and probably averaged out to be a little bit older. I think even the younger kids were more prepared to accept the idea of the future and what it might look like. But I don't want to get into science fiction in the sense of *speculative* literature; The Legion is essentially just super-heroes of the future.

Basically the strip has always been handled like that. What you call the Boltinoff approach was inherited to some extent from Weisinger: Making them super-hero stories and super-villain stories with rare instances of science fiction. And it's the kind of ray-gun science fiction you find in *Star Wars*. You don't see a lot of references to what the different social morays may be at the time; you still accept the fact that it's going to be one-on-one boy-girl relationships. I don't intend to try to do all kinds of sociological things in the strip. I'm just interested in doing a good adventure series, but instead of being set in the present, it's set in the future. Which is, I think, what Shooter and Levitz and Conway and Wein and all the others have been trying to do for the most part. Correct me if I'm wrong; I haven't read every issue

OUTPOST: No, it sounds perfectly right. And I think the **Outpost** readers will be glad to hear it.

"They're still kids, but I don't see a lot of difference between the Legionnaires and adult super-heroes, who act every bit as immature as Legionnaires ever could . . ."

THOMAS: I'm not looking to change things greatly. The challenge to me was just getting into that book and having a lot of fun with all the characters, like some gigantic chess game, each piece with a different power and personality. The characters are enough to handle themselves, without trying to bring in a lot of additional complicating factors. That might bring a certain maturity to the strip, but I think that would take all the fun out of it. The Legion of Super-Heroes needs that fun.

Just as I have to have a view of World War II to write the All-Star Squadron, I have to have a consistent view of the future in order to write the Legion. Things have been through a lot of changes in a thousand years. Six World Wars and all sorts of space and stellar travel, and to justify it in my own mind, I have to look at it as though things have come around full circle, to a point where a lot of things are very much like they are today.

And it's not that the Legionnaries are really speaking Modern English exactly as we speak it today, but the're speaking equivalents and we're reading translations. I remember how struck I was when someone did a translation years ago of *The Odyssey* and they used expressions like "snake in the grass." First of all, in Greek, "snake in the grass" might be a very old expression. There's no reason for us to assume that it's a modern expression. If it's a cliche, it could go back thousands of years in one form or another, in one language or another. And second, even if they had some other expression, like "dragon in the weeds," [laughs] the translator would try to give us the feel that the character was being called some kind of cliche epithet, and therefore use the familiar "snake in the grass" in its place. A lot of the problems with writing the Legion are the same problems one would have if one were translating an ancient work of literature, like Homer, and trying to make it relevant to today's audience. You're always caught between whether you want to use the exact words or to give the feel of how those words were understood when they were first written. Sometimes the feel is more important and that's what's more important to me.

OUTPOST: We're glad to hear all of this.

THOMAS: I get a kick out of this. I haven't been a regular Legion reader, but the people at DC were surprised to hear that I had heard of most of the Legionnaires, that I knew the general parameters of the strip. After all, I had at various times bought Superman family comics going back some years, and one couldn't do that for very long without being aware of the Legion of Super-Heroes.

OUTPOST: Did you read those comics when you were a kid?

THOMAS: I bought a couple of them, but I really can't say that I did with any regularity. I've bought almost every DC super-hero comic and a number of others DC came out with for the last couple of decades, but I never saved any of them. So I had to go back and spend—I think it must have been several hundred dollars—picking up the books. It's tax deductible, but I did spend several hundred dollars on them. I should only be lacking—and this includes the cameos listed in that **Amazing World of DC Comics** (#9) Legion Handbook—maybe two or three or four comics that had a head shot of one or two members in them. I figured, if I was going to do it, I might as well do it up right. I've read a lot of them; of course, after a while it becomes a blur in your mind because there are so many characters. I remember Gerry Conway telling me that he got two of the girls mixed up and made one the girlfriend of the wrong guy, and nobody seemed to notice for some months. But for the most part, I'm aware of the fact that these characters have a long history.

What I want to attempt—and I think Len and MIke are in agreement with me—is to try to get the LSH back to where it was a couple of years ago. It's slipped a little bit in that time. I think that can be done with Jimmy Janes, though if he somehow doesn't prove to be the right artist for the Legion, he might simply be better used on something else. You have to remember that there aren't too many people who want to do the groups I like to write. I understand that Joe Staton prays nightly for Janes' health, because Joe's afraid that he might end up doing the LSH again. It's easier for me to research, let alone write all of these characters, than it is for an artist to have to draw the bunch of them.

OUTPOST: We got the impression from talking to Len and Mike [see the "Len Wein/Mike barr Interview, page 14] that you might have been making scorecards for the Legionnaires to keep track of them.

THOMAS: Well, not scorecards as such. I just typed out all the name so I wouldn't have to keep looking up the name of the home planets and real names out of the **Amazing World** Legion Handbook. Otherwise I haven't done anything in writing so far. The information is very easy to look up in that wonderful 1975 **Amazing World**, even though it's a few years out of date. And if anything's been done that shades any light on the Legion of Super-Heroes since then, I'd like to see it. I would also appreciate any suggestions, though I may or may not take them. My old friend Jerry Bails has been one of the biggest **All-Star** fans, but when I was starting that, too, I had to do it my own way. Even so, I am interested in the fans' comments. I know how enthusiastic the fans of the Legion are.

OUTPOST: Since you have the back issues, you must have noticed that each of the previous writers had a distinct, individual approach to the Legion.

THOMAS: I haven't had a chance to read them all yet. I've gone through literally dozens of them from cover to cover and almost everything I've at least skimmed over. Of course there are a lot of approaches, yeah.

OUTPOST: Which ones did you like, or which might be the strongest influence on your own approach?

THOMAS: Well, I think the styles which are closest to mine are those of Gerry Conway and Len Wein, who are contemporaries of mine on the comics scene, and maybe Paul Levitz's, which was influenced by my style. I think some of the best work on the Legion—not in terms of the actual writing, because it was for a different time and a different audience, but in terms of conceptualizing for it—were the issues that Jim Shooter wrote. I'm no great admirer of his in a lot of ways, but he created a lot of good villains and concepts during his couple of stints on the book. I think the Legion's best period in many ways was really when Shooter was working with Mike Grell, and maybe the Cary Bates/Dave Cockrum period before that. That was the time when the book looked the best and that's what Len and Mike and I, in connection with Jimmy Janes or someone else, are going to try to get back to. Grell's work had a kind of sheen that made it look like the future. If there's one failing in the book now, it's that it doesn't really have the kind of glow to it that it used to have. There was a kind of great beauty to it under Grell, even though he's primarily a Neal Adams imitator.

I don't know if I would be a fan of the strip if I were not writing it, but I can take a professional interest in it. I wouldn't get into the LSH if I didn't think I could maintain a fair amount of interest in it, because I had other choices. I certainly like Batman as a character, and there are other books I could have done. But there are things in the Legion that appeal to me. I've always liked super-hero group books. I've written almost all the ones at Marvel that lasted any length of time at all, including more Avengers than anyone else. And of course, my interest in the Justice League and Justice Society goes back for years. I figured, well, the Legion is certainly also one of the biggest groups that's ever appeared.

OUTPOST: Why do you so often end up writing team books? Is it a natural affinity, or typecasting . . . ?

THOMAS: It's an affinity in the sense that I like them, and for the most part I've had a reasonably good sales record with them. I've always liked team books ever since I was about four or five years old and discovered **All-Star Comics** back in the mid-1940s. That's about the only comic from the old days that I still have a complete collection of. It was my favorite comic, and anything, be it the Marvel Family or anything that was remotely like the Justice Society, was what I always liked. At one time I even had a complete collection of **Leading Comics**, the fourteen issues with the *Seven Soldiers of Victory*. When Julie Schwartz started up the Justice League, I was interested in that comic over everything else at the time. And when I went to Marvel, the first superhero strip I wrote regularly was the X-Men; then I drifted over to the Avengers. Stan [Lee] always knew I liked group books. The last couple of things I created for Marvel, several years ago, were the Invaders and the Liberty Legion. I just enjoy group books.

I had always thought the Legion was a group book that I'd never do, because it's kind of out of hand with so many characters in it. But the more I thought about it, it began to appeal to me, especially compared with the other books available for me to write. Maybe circumstances will make me leave the Legion in a few months, I don't know. But if this happens, it will be with reluctance at this point, after having spent a lot

of money on the back issues. I would only leave if I found myself too busy to write as many comics as I am at the present time. Otherwise, I hope to stay on the Legion for a considerable length of time. It wouldn't be worth it to do just a couple of issues after all the research involved.

OUTPOST: Mike Barr mentioned that you got a number of springboards from reading the old issues.

THOMAS: Yeah. Some of them involve characters that I want to bring back, like Dr. Regulus. I want to clean up a bunch of loose ends, though I couldn't think of any specific ones at the moment. I remember one character called Orion the Hunter, for example, who looked way too much like Marvel's Kraven the Hunter, but given a few modifications he was an interesting character. There was the one villain who looked a lot like Dr. Sivana . . . what was his name . . .?

OUTPOST: Mantis Morlo.

THOMAS: Yeah, I want to use him again. There are a lot of good characters like that, and there were springboards in all of those stories.

OUTPOST: Do you have any leftover ideas from Marvel that might pop up in the Legion, the way Steve Englehart brought his Mantis character into a Justice League story?

THOMAS: Not a lot, because over the last year or so at Marvel I'd been working with sword and sorcery material. Every writer has certain themes that he likes to investigate, that he returns to over and over again. So obviously there will be some similarities between my Legion and Marvel work, though hopefully there will be enough differences that nobody will be bored with it. Even if it were all but identical—which it won't be—the audience that'll be reading my Legion will probably be quite different from the audience that I had five or ten or even fifteen years ago on the Avengers or X-Men. Each of these groups has its own essense, its own form which I have to maintain to a certain extent. I can't just take an old Avengers plot and put it into the Legion. There's too many dissimilarities between the two groups.

The one thing I'm really concerned with is the Adult Legion and—this is really as much and more Mike's and Len's decision as mine—whether to let those Adult Legion futures stand as they were put forth, with the problems they cause, or whether we should find some way to overthrow them. I'm sorry that they were ever printed, but of course that was somebody else's business a long time ago.

OUTPOST: This may be one of the major topics of discussion in Legion fandom when this interview comes out, and you'll probably be hearing all the sides very shortly.

THOMAS: I'd like to have that. I always read the letters that come in. Even though the letters are not typical reflections of the readership, I still feel you can learn a lot by reading the letters pages over a period of years. Especially as they differ with each editor, you get a different sort of view of what kinds of letters came in. And even though different sorts of letters were written ten years ago than are written now, a certain overall picture will emerge from them.

I'm only sorry that, because of certain circumstances, I'm presently finishing up the last few pages of material I have to do for Marvel, which is why I haven't had a chance to study the Legion in greater detail. I'll probably have to tread water for two or three issues before I can really give the book the kind of study I'd really like to do. Right now I have to turn out work fairly quickly, having inherited a story in the middle and with work backed up from Marvel, so I don't have the chance to read a lot of comic books in between. I also have a screen project that I have to work on, and that may take up much of my time. But this isn't going to last long. I expect to get back on the Legion in greater detail in the next few weeks. Even now, every few days, I'll pick up five or ten issues, and whether I've seen them before or not, I'll immerse myself in them. Any time I'm going to write Legion dialogue, I'll pick up a few of the recent issues and page through the older ones, just to get the mood for writing the book. After all, you've got so many characters, so many speech patterns . . .

I'll have to beg the indulgence of Legion fans for a few issues; it may take me that long to get into the thing. I really wasn't expecting to be doing the Legion, and then all of a sudden here I am. But it is something I volunteered to do. Most people ask, "How did they trick you into doing the Legion instead of Batman?" because everybody in the world wants to write Batman. Not that many people seem to be lining up to try the Legion. That's just one way in which I'm different. I had the feeling that I could have fun, in a non-destructive way, with the Legion of Super-Heroes. I could gladly just do a lot of fun stories, intermeshing the characters and so forth, without having to get involved with nitty-gritty crime, which actually bores me in Batman. I don't care much for all the petty robberies and international intrigue and Bruce Wayne as financier—that just bore me to tears, even when it's done well. I prefer something in which you've got cosmic heroes fighting cosmic villains on a cosmic scale.

Which is kind of interesting, because the other super-hero group I'm writing, the All-Star Squadron that I more-or-less created, is also in a different time period than the present, being in the early 1940s. In many ways, it'll be a much more serious book.

OUTPOST: What do you mean by "serious?"

THOMAS: Serious, in the sense that it deal with a real time when there were real, documented human miseries. Whereas, there's a certain antiseptic feeling to the Thirtieth Century in the Legion of Super-Heroes, and it's a little harder to get involved with it. It's a little harder to have life and death feelings about the world itself, because it's an imaginary world a thousand years in the future. All the same, that doesn't mean you can't get involved with the individual characters. It's like picking up the lives of old friends every month or so, which is what's good about most of the better comics, a feeling of a continuing, ongoing saga, like a soap opera . . . except that unlike the soap operas on television, comics have things *happening* [laughs] fictionally.

OUTPOST: Are you planning to introduce any new Legionnaires?

THOMAS: In a few months, I'd like to bring in one or two characters of my own, just to feel that I've made some little contribution to the Legion mythos. But I don't want to rush into it, because there are already enough characters running around in the Legion to people several

Laughing Boy . . .

books. I'll wait some time until I get an idea, which is the way a lot of these characters were invented. Somebody just got an idea for a story to write around a character, and sometimes they became a Legion members and sometimes they didn't, and sometimes they went away and came back later because the readers or the writer liked them. I'll play it by ear and see what happens, but right now I don't have any characters in mind.

I thought of making up funny names to go along with the "Bouncing Boy" spirit of the thing. I thought, I could come up with a guy who causes laughter and call him Laughing Boy or something. [laughs] There are really only a couple of names that are embarrassments, like Matter-Eater Lad, and a couple that are even hard to say. We've been talking about bringing back Tyroc. I think there ought to be more members of other races involved here. There's something strange about the idea of a future in which there are no orientals and one black guy. Tyroc's name doesn't even fit the context of the rest of the Legion.

OUTPOST: What about alien Legionnaires?

THOMAS: I'm very much in favor of that. If I create a Legionnaire, he's bound to be of a different race, either in terms of being non-caucasian, or in terms of being from other than the human race. I'd like to see more aliens along the lines of Chameleon Boy. I don't want to get too tied down to today's realities, because we're as far away from 3000 A.D. as we are from Attila the Hun. It's not going to make any sense to speak of a French Legionnaire; I don't want to get bogged down in things that are merely extensions of today's politics because the Legion is too far in the future to be involved in that. That's one of the ways that the Legion is nice; it assumes that all the petty socio-political problems we know have been wiped out, though there may be plenty of other problems in their place. That's the real

tightrope you have to walk on this strip. My idea of writing comics is such that I will have to start exploring some of these things, because that's what interests me. I'm not interested in trying to impose some sort of ultra-realistic framework on the world, because it would be impossible to do, and it would take so much space that there wouldn't be any left to do a story.

OUTPOST: Do you think you'll give each Legionnaire equal time, or are you going to be working with a core membership, a few specific Legionnaires who would appear in nearly every issue?

THOMAS: I personally feel that there are certain members that we ought to play up more than the others. It's not so much that I care which ones they are, as I think one of the secrets to good sales is to have a few, familiar people the readers know and like in virtually every issue. But that doesn't mean we won't be able to make exceptions.

OUTPOST: Do you have any favorite Legionnaires of your own right now?

THOMAS: Not as much now as I would have had if they hadn't covered up a lot of the girls, revamping the costumes to supposedly make them less sexist or something. I don't know if that was the real intention, but it suddenly looks as if there's some sort of cover-up thing for the girls. I really don't know if that's the Comics Code, or what. But I don't really care for it much, because I don't think it's generally been done well. And I think it's silly in comics, anyway.

But if I had any preference for particular characters, it would probably be for using some of the basic core characters who were around from the very beginning: Saturn Girl, Cosmic Boy, and Lightning Lad, the first three. Wildfire is interesting too, because he's so different and so argumentative, he makes a natural foil for the others. I like Sun Boy's costume as a personal preference. As far as the ladies besides Saturn Girl, I like Shadow Lass because she's blue-skinned; and something more might be done with Karate Kid, who's half-Japanese and

A French Legionnaire . . .

spent a lot of time in the Twentieth Century. The mere fact that he came to the Twentieth Century for a period of time longer than any other Legionniare (not counting Superboy or Supergirl) means that he would have a little different perspective on things.

I'm always concerned with strange things like why Shrinking Violet doesn't have any violet in her costume. Nobody quite knows what Ultra Boy's powers are. Gerry had an idea which I may play around with: Since Lightning Lad is about to resign as Legion Leader, there was some talk of Princess Projectra—who is, of course, royalty—taking over. Somehow, she doesn't seem to me like the type who would make a good Leader. *She* might feel she would, but I don't know if she really would.

One of the things I like is the fact that it is called the Legion *clubhouse*. It's really like a lot of kids getting together and saving the world. Except for the fact that the girls are allowed in, it's almost like Tubby and Little Lulu. But I enjoy that, and I think I'm going to enjoy getting into it more.

OUTPOST: Do you see the Legionnaires as adults, or as kids growing up?

THOMAS: I have to keep them fairly youthful, but not mature. They're still kids, but I don't see a lot of difference between them and adult super-heroes . . . especially not the adults who are in the other super-hero groups, who act every bit as immature as the Legionnaires ever could. I guess it's just something about super-heroes in general, whatever the age.

You can't ever quite think of them as growing up, because you know they're not really going to get past a certain age in the book, so you have to be kind of coy about that. I try to think of them as young adults, but they're probably doing pretty well at holding their own, considering how the other super-heroes behave. Also, this being a thousand years in the future, we don't really know if certain trends will continue. By that time, kids might be so ultra-sophisticated that they wouldn't be anything like what the Legionnaires are. On the other hand, going by my own theory that things have come full circle, you can accept that these people are still behaving like "kids" to some extent, even if they are rather mature ones with a highly developed sense of general responsibility and organization. After all, they are pretty special, or else they wouldn't be in the Legion in the first place. Not just anybody gets into that organization.

I'd like to use some of the Legion of Substitute Heroes off and on. I'd even like to bring in Jimmy Olsen as Elastic lad, or Lana Lang with insect powers, because I can't stand how awful she looks when she uses them. I'd like to bring in Supergirl; I like the idea of having Superboy and Supergirl together; I don't think that was ever played up much. The Legion's sales are, I think, quite adequate, but they're looking for something like that to make it take off again. There was a time when it was actually the best-selling DC book. And it is still one of the better DC books, though not quite as strong as it one was. There may be any number of different reasons for that, including just changing tastes, but it is still fairly popular. It's for Len and Mike and the people above them to decide what the right moves are. I just suggest what I think they should be, and as long as I'm reasonably happy, I'll just keep writing. If I get too unhappy with the direction they wanted me to take, I'd just drop the book, but I don't expect that to happen.

OUTPOST: Are you planning any crossovers of characters from other DC books?

THOMAS: I'm not planning any now because, again, there are already so many characters to deal with. Some time in the future, I'd like to have the Legion and the All-Star Squadron meet, because neither of them come from today's present, one being from the 1940s and the other from the distant future. But this won't happen for six months or a year minimum, because I haven't such a good handle on either group yet that I'd want to have them meet. Of course, the Legion has already met the Justice Society and Justice League in a couple of stories.

This is something Jack Harris and I had discussed, and Gerry Conway was in favor of this also: To deal with the future of other DC strips . . . the future Green Lantern, maybe, or what's Thanagar like, Hawkman's home planet, in the Thirtieth Century? The Mars of J'Onn J'Onzz—what happens to his people 1000 years in the future? I've always liked the idea of the Martian Manhunter character; maybe one of their people will come back and join the Legion.

I'd be looking very much for suggestions like this, not only on the kinds of storylines the long-time readers like, but to find out which of the characters people think deserve to be played up the most. I have my own ideas, but I'm always interested in hearing someone else's suggestions. When I come to All-Star Squadron, I have my own ideas already as to which characters I want to use, but I don't have as many preconceived notions with the Legion. I'm also very open to seeing what other people think because I don't have an exact set of characters who I'm determined to use come hell or high water. Like, I don't know how people are reacting to Blok, a somewhat different character who's a little like the Thing or the Hulk. I'm not that wild on him myself, but the fact is that he's a new character and I can't drop him totally when he just came in. I don't know how Len and Mike feel about him. I suspect he'll be around a while . . . how prominently I don't know. If he didn't already

"In some ways, comics are trying to become too sophisticated . . . everything has to be written for the same particular, small group of comics *reviewers* . . ."

exist, I don't think that I would put him into the strip, but now that he's there I can't ignore him. On the other hand, one could always get rid of some of these characters for awhile.

In the story I inherited from Gerry, I think almost all of the characters appear at least in passing. There must be at least twenty characters in the three issues counting the one I had to plot. So I got a baptism of fire right away.

OUTPOST: I was just reminded that a character looking very much like the Martian Manhunter was at the wedding of Bouncing Boy and Duo Damsel in **Superboy** #200. In the background of the full-page wedding scene.

THOMAS: I'll have to take a look at that. Those are some of the things—

OUTPOST: Tars Tarkas is also there.

THOMAS: [laughs] Tars Tarkas? Oh yeah, that's probably Cockrum's idea. Cockrum is a big *John Carter of Mars* fan.

OUTPOST: The wedding took place on Mars.

THOMAS: That's exactly the kind of thing I want to fool around with. And I'd like to explore themes and concepts from other literatures like John Carter . . .

OUTPOST: Weisinger did that a lot. He did a *Moby Dick* Legion and a Legion *Odyssey*.

THOMAS: I know Moby Dick's been done once or twice—I also did it in the Hulk. But what I meant was that even from DC there must be a lot of established old futures lurking around there from the archives of various other strips. I don't know about the Thirtieth Century *per se*, but you do have that Fiftieth Century Green Lantern. Thanagar might or might not still exist. Those are the things we might bring in. I would like to emphasize the alien a little more. I always like strips that have some less human aliens in them. That gives it a little more of a science fiction feel.

OUTPOST: Will you have anything to do with the proposed Legion/X-Men team-up?

THOMAS: I'm not aware of anything like that. Nobody has said anything about it to me, because I just took over the book. It really depends on a number of factors, one of which is whose turn it is to come up with the creative team on the joint project. If it's DC's turn, it might be me, but if it's Marvel's turn it's more likely to be Chris Claremont and Dave Cockrum. That would make a lot of sense because Cockrum has drawn the Legion. I won't really care that much one way or another; I'd just as soon not do a Legion/X-Men team-up because I don't read the X-Men. I don't read many comics anymore. I collect them all. I kind of glance through them. I'm aware that X-Men is a good comic. And I'm very interested in comics in general. But, I'm not very interested in any one comic in particular, so I'm only peripherally familiar with what's going on in any given book. For me to do the X-Men meeting the Legion would mean doing a lot of research on the X-Men just to do this one special issue, so I'm not terribly interested.

I was always very much in favor of the idea of inter-company crossovers at a time when a lot of the editors at Marvel were not. I was in favor of it from the very first Superman/Spider-Man thing when it was done several years ago, but I myself have not had a great notion to write any of those inter-company books unless it involved characters I was doing or had done. I'd love to do the All-Star Squadron meeting the Invaders, but otherwise I really wouldn't care to write any of those books. The Legion/X-Men book isn't projected for another year or two, is it?

OUTPOST: Claremont said at a recent convention that no contracts had been signed, but that he was supposed to be writing it.

THOMAS: This may very well be. I get most of my news from the fanzines myself. I think about comics from day to day when I'm writing them, but the rest of the day I just forget about them.

OUTPOST: What do you think of Legion fandom so far?

THOMAS: Well, I don't know much about it. I haven't seen any copies of **The Legion Outpost**, though Jack Harris, had he stayed on as editor, was going to try to line up some copies of things including some of your publications. I think anything like that is always interesting becasue it's very flattering to see that there are people who like the material well enough to follow it for a number of years and to be interested in what happens to that degree. Of course, I was that way about comics myself, so I understand it.

One thing that I am fairly sure of is that, in a situation where I really disagree with what fans say, I have enough confidence in my own abilities to ignore the fans. Even if Legion fandom were 100% united against me. After all, I'm the one who's writing it. At the same time, before I reject it, I want to hear it . . . any ideas that are simply being offered the way I used to send in ideas. If somebody's going to try to sell me something, I don't want to hear it. If they want to sell it, let them sell it to DC. But if people have suggestions about the things they like or don't like about the way the book was handled in the past, I'm very interested in what they have to say.

If there's any strangeness to me about Legion fandom, I guess it's because the Legion to me is a more juvenile concept in comics than most, but at the same time that was what appealed to me about it. In some ways, comics are trying to become too sophisticated, to the point where I begin to feel that everything in the world has to be written for the same particular, small group of comics *reviewers*. I'm more interested in doing comics for a wide, general audience, not in pleasing the tiny little groups. So I don't yet have a firm view of Legion fandom at all. Maybe I will after you send me some of your material.

I'm sorry I couldn't tell you a lot of profound stuff, but I've still only written 25 pages of the Legion, and that under such duress that I barely remember what I plotted.

OUTPOST: I think that people who read this interview will still find a great deal of optimism from what you've told us.

THOMAS: If nothing else, I feel that the basic direction the book has taken all along is pretty good, and I'm just interested in doing my own interpretation. I might be apprehensive if I saw somebody about to take over a book I really liked, with the idea that he had to try to change everything. This has been one of the curses of comics in recent years; a few writers, when they take over a series that seems to be doing pretty well, immediately decide to Indian-wrestle it into some new form to suit their own preconceptions. Well, I don't have a lot of preconceptions about the Legion of Super-Heroes. It's obviously been pretty successful for some years without me. So, while I want to leave my mark on it in some way, I don't have any intention of immediately making great sweeping changes in it. The only kind of change I'd make would be very evolutionary, in the very strict sense of seeing survival of the fittest, whatever seems to work. There will be no revolution where I come in and say, "Now I'm determined to turn it into hardcore science fiction or this or that." Except for broadening the Legion with a few more aliens and other Earth races here and there, I don't really any preconceived ideas.

It'll take me three or four issues to get into it; the series don't exactly write themselves, but they seem as if they do because the ideas just start pouring out of you. But they don't *really* write themselves; otherwise Chris Claremont's and mine and Denny O'Neil's and everybody's comics, and everybody's version of the Legion, would be exactly the same. And they obviously aren't. But once things start taking form, you just naturally get into a style which says to you that *this is the way you ought to write it*. As long as that meets the approval of the editor, I figure I'll just drift instinctively into some direction in the next few months. You'll know about it not too much longer after I will.

Originally intended as a text page for a reprint digest, the following essay was "assigned" to Jim Shooter by former Legion of Super-Heroes *editor Jack C. Harris. After it remained unused for a length of time, Jim withdrew the piece and turned it over to* The Legion Outpost.

How I Spent My Summer Vacation

By JIM SHOOTER

The title of this piece is pretty strange for a retrospective on the Legion of Super-Heroes, I'll admit. I suppose I should have called this "Looking Back at the Legion," or "My Years with the LSH," or even "I Remember Mon-El." But I chose the title for a reason.

Of course, everyone who's ever attended grammar school has had to write at least one composition entitled "How I Spent My Summer Vacation." Most of my friends *suffered* through the ordeal, begrudging every word that flowed like molasses from their Eberhard Faber #2's. I, on the other hand, rather enjoyed writing my composition. I thought it was easy. It occurred to me, at a rather tender age, that if one could somehow get *paid* for this sort of thing, one had, indeed, discovered a legal racket. Thus were the seeds of my writing career sown.

Sure enough, eventually I sold a script for a Legion of Super-Heroes story to the late, great Mort Weisinger, who edited the exploits of that august group back then in 1966, thereby fulfilling my childhood dream of raking in big bucks just for putting words on paper.

Still, you ask, why the stupid title? Well, I wrote that first script in the *summer* of 1965, laboring long and hard up in my hot, stuffy little room while other 13-year-old kids were out playing baseball, swimming, hanging around and otherwise enjoying their vacations. Ergo, the origin of Jim Shooter, Professional Writer and Legion Scripter Emeritus is precisely How I Spent My Summer Vacation in 1965.

So what? So who should care about my beginnings as scripter for the Legion, much less the fulfillment of my childhood dreams? No one. What might be of interest, however, is the unique situation my rather young debut as Legion scripter created: I was about the same age as my characters. I was also about the same age as my audience. Better still, my *friends*, who were also my audience, were the same age as my characters, so my friends *became* my characters who were my audience, who . . .

You get the drift. Now for the really sweet part—*we all aged together*, characters, friends/audience and me. I can vouch for the fact that working with a teen-aged writer aged Mort a few zillion years, too, but the point is that the Legion grew up with me from early 1966 to early 1970. That may not mean much to anyone else, but to *my* point of view, it made those characters very special, and good, bad or indifferent, I feel responsible for the characters of the Legionnaires I wrote in that period.

You see, before I happened along, the Legion of Super-Heroes was very much a plot-oriented book with very little space devoted to characterization. The eminently capable gentlemen who preceeded me on the strip, working with Mort, had given the title a sweeping, science fiction space-opera identity, which suited it. All too often, though, six planets in four pages made for lines of dialogue like, "My home world . . . *choke* . . . *destroyed!*" That just wasn't enough *angst* for me. Being a 13-year-old makes one a leading authority on angst, and I strove to add some to the series.

Something had to give, of course, to fit the angst. Sadly, it was some of the plot, and five of the six planets per four pages. Some readers missed the outrageous space-operas, but most applauded the advent of characterization. A new age was upon us, after all—the *Marvel Age*. Stan Lee was King. Old directions *had* to change, or—dare we say it?—National Comics was in trouble. Thus, with Mort's blessing I struggled to find *raison d'etre* for a character called Bouncing Boy, who previously had been offered up at face value, and played straight and serious.

I found my Bouncing Boy among my Bethel Park Senior High classmates, in the person of a friend whose initials, T.K., and slightly rotund body had earned him the nickname "Teakettle." Going through high school coping with a weight problem and the name Teakettle is not a whole lot different, I think, than being Bouncing Boy in the Legion of Super-Heroes. Thus, in my mind, they became one, and BB grew into a bright-but-insecure, self-effacing, lovable guy who was resigned to the role of comic relief and once described himself as the Legion's ". . . self-appointed chief of morale." I found similar models for the other Legionnaires. It was easy. Everyone is a character in high school, because no one has learned to hide it yet.

Naturally, the high school "character" I knew best was the tall skinny kid with the armload of science books who was renowned for "drawing cartoons," so there was quite a bit of me scattered among my 20-odd Legionnaire charges. When Karate Kid did something impulsive, and got himself in trouble, believe me, I knew *just* how he felt.

So we all progressed—my friends/audience/characters/self thundered toward adulthood together. Together, we abandoned the shy, uncertainty of our first dates and slowly learned about love. In my first Legion script ever (**Adventure Comics** #348, "Target — 21 Legionnaires") Duo Damsel girlishly flirts with Superboy, eager to hold hands with the "most powerful" Legionnaire, eager to be seen with the Legion's equivalent of the Big Man On Campus. Didn't all freshman girls want to hang out with the football stars? Her crush on Superboy grew, as issues passed, while he noticed her less and less. The tension built to the kind of cataclysmic heartbreak that only a sophomore girl, shattered by unrequited love, can know.

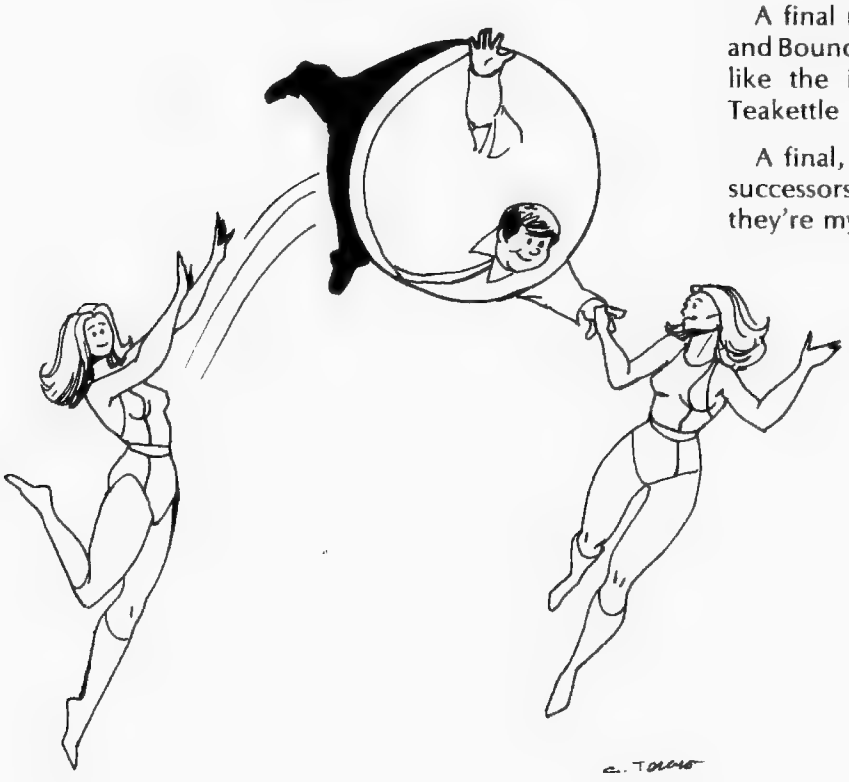
Just like the classmate she was modeled after, Duo Damsel went on, though, to discover that just as her love had gone unnoticed by Superboy, someone else's love for her had gone unnoticed. He was a bright-but-insecure, self-effacing, lovable guy, more than a bit on the plump side, but that was okay. She had learned, and grown, and was able to find in Bouncing Boy things that mattered, things that made him special to her. Their relationship blossomed . . . they were seniors at the Sweethearts Ball, truly in love.

I left the Legion and comics late in 1969 to pursue other things. One way and another, I ended up back scripting the LSH in 1974. Murray Boltinoff had taken over as editor, and things were a bit different. For one thing, he insisted that the Legionnaires were "all about 15 years old."

Now the editor is responsible for a book's success or failure, and so, by definition, he's always right. Murray's editorial approach was highly successful, making the LSH a top book for DC. But frankly, I couldn't adjust to this newfangled angle on that old gang of mine. It showed. My stories were heavily edited and often had to be rewritten (both new experiences for me). Finally, it just seemed best to look for greener pastures elsewhere. I took an offer from Marvel Comics, where I am today, as editor-in-chief. I've been at Marvel for four years now—and still, the characters I'm most identified with are the Legion of Super-Heroes . . . and I have to admit, I miss them.

A final note—I've been thinking about Duo Damsel and Bouncing Boy being married now. For a time, I didn't like the idea, but I've changed my mind. I figure Teakettle would like it that way.

A final, final note, to Jack, and whomever his future successors may be—take care of 'em willya? After all, they're my friends. *choke*!



THE Mike Barr Len Wein INTERVIEW

Len Wein was part of the first generation of professional comics artists and writers to come out of the ranks of comics fandom in the late 1960s. He learned his craft from the likes of Joe Orlando, Julius Schwartz and others who helped to *invent* the American comic book.

Now, Mike Barr comes into the field as a member of the second generation of fans-turned-pro. Under the watchful eye of Len Wein, he is the man who will guide the Legion's future.

Conducted and Transcribed by
JAY ZILBER and KEN GALE
December 30, 1980

OUTPOST: Why are you the editor of **The Legion of Super-Heroes**?

LEN WEIN: It's a dirty job, but somebody has to do it.

OUTPOST: Were you assigned to the book, or did you ask for it?

WEIN: Nobody *asks* for the Legion!

OUTPOST: Were you coerced?

WEIN: Not coercion . . . it was just the logical choice. When Jack [Harris] was shifted sideways into the foreign department and they were splitting up his books, since I'd been doing most of the super-hero books to begin with, it made for the logical choice to move the Legion to my end of the department. Dick [Giordano] was interested in Batman—that's probably the reason he took the editor's job—and the mystery books sorta fell to him, since he enjoyed doing that. I got all the super-hero stuff.

Besides, it was easier for me and Mike because I've *read* the Legion, and I have some idea what's going on.

MIKE BARR: And when I took the job as editor, and as Len's associate editor, Len said, "You're going to be editing **The Legion of Super-Heroes**." Len said he had good, logical reasons why he gave me each of four books, which I haven't had time to ask him yet. I'm not kidding.

OUTPOST: This is the first time Mike Barr has been interviewed by the fan press. Tell us about yourself, and your meteoric rise to power.

BARR: I stumbled over comics when I was young, like all of us in fandom did. And also like most of us in fandom, I never quite let them go, as most other kids do. When I discovered the letters pages, I began writing fan letters by the ton—too late, unfortunately, to get original art, something I still kick myself for.

From the letters pages, I established . . . not credentials, but at least guys like Julie Schwartz understood that I was not just some fly-by-night kid who had a crazy urge to write letters . . . that I was . . . I don't want to say a "serious" comic book fan, but that I was a constant reader of the books.

So that when I began submitting scripts, he didn't just throw them away as some sort of prank. He returned a lot of them to me and didn't buy them, but he didn't throw them away. Finally, he did buy an Elongated Man story from me in 1974.

OUTPOST: You sort of disappeared for a while after that.

BARR: Well, I didn't disappear. I was still trying like hell to sell stories, but I was living in Ohio and nobody was buying any.

OUTPOST: A problem some of us are familiar with.

BARR: Yeah, really. I was out there saying, "I'm still here, honest, and I'd really like to sell this story." And if they returned it at all, they'd say "No, thank you."

If you're interested in trivia, by the way, I have never had an Elongated Man story drawn by an artist who was born in this country. But one of them was Garcia Lopez, so I'm not complaining.

I came to DC in October 1977, and worked here until May of 1979 as a proofreader and assistant editor. Then I worked at Simulations Publications Inc., the wargames people—the second biggest company after TSR, the ones with Dungeons and Dragons. I worked at SPI as an editorial assistant for three or four months. Then I quit and went freelance for about a year, primarily writing for comic books . . .

Until just last month. I was sitting at home, plotting an issue of **The Avengers**—which I'm *still* plotting—when the phone rang, and it was Len and Joe Orlando. They told me how Jack was no longer an editor, and Len said, "I'd like you to come aboard as my associate editor, and as editor of these four books." I said, "Like **The Flash** . . . hubba hubba!!" I vacillated for about 24 hours and accepted the job.

OUTPOST: Which four books are you handling?

BARR: **Flash**, **Legion of Super-Heroes**, **Unknown Soldier** and **Weird War Tales**.

OUTPOST: And Len is editing . . . ?

WEIN: **Adventure—Dial H for Hero**, **All-Star Squadron**, **Justice League**, **New Teen Titans**, **Wonder Woman** and **World's Finest**. **Green Lantern**'s about to shift next door to Dick's office. I ran out of time to do it.

OUTPOST: What were the logical reasons why Mike ended up with his four books?

BARR: I want to know this myself!

WEIN: Since you're technically to some degree an editor-in-training, these are good books to learn on. **The Legion of Super-Heroes** book would go to you because it doesn't tie into any of the rest of the super-hero books we've got. In a lot of fashions, it's a book that stands on its own. It would be much more difficult to give you **Justice League**, which ties into **World's Finest** and all sorts of other books, than it would be to give you the Legion.

The Flash is a good, solid super-hero book being produced by a good, solid group of professional people who know what they're doing, essentially, and it will help train you inasmuch as you work with them. **Unknown Soldier** I never liked anyway, so I gave it to you; and **Weird War**—again, same logic as before—it's a good training book because of the amount and variety of people you'll work with.

OUTPOST: Why is Roy Thomas writing the Legion?

WEIN: Because he likes to write books that are 25 pages long, and that he can control. As a Batman writer, there were two other Batman writers he had to deal with—Gerry [Conway], mostly, and me, and also Mike and the other guys who do **Brave and Bold**. With the Legion, he doesn't have to worry about anyone else but himself. He can do whatever he wants, by himself, without worrying about affecting any other books, or *being affected* by any other books.

OUTPOST: Has he any long-range plans for the Legion?

BARR: We've talked about that briefly. I don't think it's saying too much to reveal that we do intend to bring Superboy back, as a semi-regular. Because we feel, quite simply, that he helps the book.

WEIN: He helps the sales.

BARR: We like him. And also, if someone is bringing out another multi-million-dollar movie about him as an adult, it's silly not to have him in there as Superboy if we can manage it. I always felt he belongs there, anyway . . . I never felt quite right about the Legion if Superboy wasn't in there once in awhile.

OUTPOST: Well, that's a short-range plan. What does he plan beyond that?

BARR: Long-range? We're not sure yet.

WEIN: He's only been doing the book for two weeks yet!

OUTPOST: Does he plan on *being* on the Legion for a long time?

BARR: Oh, yes. In typical Roy fashion, he was telling me that he had not read the book for a while—I don't know if he read it when he was a kid or not—but he said that he had bought *all* the back issues. He's doing *tons* of research, correlating all the characters, all their home worlds, all that sort of thing, to come up with story ideas. When Roy takes over a book, he takes over a book!

WEIN: He intends to introduce a couple of new Legionnaires, too.

OUTPOST: We should probably make you aware, if you aren't already, that there's an established Thirtieth Century law that limits the Legion's membership to 25.

WEIN: Oh, we'll change the law. It's wonderful when you're omnipotent. You can do anything you want. We made up the law that says 25 members; we can make up a new law that says there can be 114.

OUTPOST: Do you think that's wise? Past Legion writers and editors have said that they wished the law limited them to five or six members.

WEIN: It's actually a matter of lack of control. As I said earlier, half-kiddingly, we're omnipotent. Because there are 27 members of the Legion, or 114 members, doesn't mean we can't do stories that focus on only five members every month. We're in charge; we do what we want to do. This is still fiction! We make it up!

BARR: One of the things we talked about doing is essentially forming a core group of characters. Roy is also intrigued, as am I, by the subdivisions, the Espionage Squad—we want to bring that back, with the probable addition of Karate Kid because of his Ninja skills.

What we do *not* intend to do is to get rid of any characters that are in the Legion now. When I was a kid, I always hated it when they'd say, "We didn't get any mail about Potato Salad Man, so we're going to take him out." Well, I *liked* Potato Salad Man, but I didn't always write a letter saying so. I figure all of the Legionnaires, even Matter-Eater Lad, have fans somewhere.

"I never considered copying the X-Men in the Legion book. I *created* the new X-Men! I consider the Legion a *radically* different kind of comic book . . ."

OUTPOST: So nobody's to be killed off in your immediate future.

WEIN: Not that I know of.

OUTPOST: When someone usually takes over a feature, there is a tendency for them to ignore what has gone on before, immediately kill somebody off, give everybody else a new job, start fresh with a "bold new direction" like that. How are you going to establish your credibility?

WEIN: I don't think we have to, frankly.

OUTPOST: The Legion, as a book, still has to establish its credibility.

WEIN: I think it already has credibility. It's got all you people doing fanzines about it.

OUTPOST: That's just us.

WEIN: If you buy the book every month, It's got credibility.

OUTPOST: Some of us don't.

WEIN: Then why are you wasting your vacation time sitting here interviewing us?

OUTPOST: Because we care.

WEIN: Then why don't you buy the book?

OUTPOST: Because we care! We don't want to buy a book we don't like.

BARR: I understand that, believe it or not.

OUTPOST: Will you and Roy be working with Jimmy Janes as the artist?

WEIN: For the moment.

OUTPOST: We've been told that, according to some of the midwest distributors, Jimmy Janes' books don't sell.

WEIN: That's garbage. You haven't got a big run of Jimmy Janes books to look at. If sales dropped every time Jimmy Janes took over a book, then you can say Jimmy Janes doesn't sell. He's done *this one book!* He took it over at a period when Superboy had just left the group, and the sales were dropping because of that. It had nothing to do with Jimmy Janes.

I think, frankly, part of the problem is the inking. You'd be surprised at the difference between the pencil jobs and the ink jobs. A lot of people have said that the pencils look really nice, but it doesn't when it's inked. So we're changing the inker.

OUTPOST: Who'll be inking it?

WEIN: Right now, as soon as we talk the poor sucker into it, Bruce Patterson. You have to understand, folks, we have a book here that nobody wants to do!

OUTPOST: Why is that? It's strange, because there are a huge number of Legion fans who, if they had the talent, would love to be doing it. Why aren't any of those people, those who do have the talent, working here?

WEIN: I think it's probably a direct dichotomy. If you don't have the talent, you want to do the Legion. If you do have talent, you know better.

OUTPOST: The talented Legion fans become lawyers, geneticists and newspaper editors.

WEIN: The Legion is a hard book to do. It's got Legion fans like you picking on whomever does it. Nobody really wants the grief of going, "Oh god, they complained because I gave Matter-Eater Lad four thumbs again," or whatever he happened to do. It's just more aggravation than it's worth.

BARR: It's got such a sheer bulk of characters and settings—and you have to design the future.

OUTPOST: A lot of artists *like* to draw futuristic settings.

BARR: I'm not knocking that. I'm just saying—nobody should be surprised by this—a lot of people in this business are not in it mainly for the love of comics, but for the money. I don't knock that. But if they can find some strip with one lead character set in the present day, they'll take that over the Legion, which has a million characters and takes place a thousand years in the future.

OUTPOST: Does the Legion still get the most mail?

WEIN: Oh, no. Nowhere near the most.

OUTPOST: No? When did it stop?

WEIN: When the new **Teen Titans** premiered. The Titans get more mail than God.

OUTPOST: At one time, the Legion did get the most mail. What happened?

WEIN: I don't know . . . I only started editing the book an hour and a half ago!

BARR: It's not a small amount of mail by any means; it's just not the most.

OUTPOST: It sounds as though our generation of Legion fandom grew up and got tired of it.

BARR: Well, that's why I'm really glad to see Roy on the book, because if anyone can awaken excitement, it's Roy. He really is himself excited about it. He bought, out of his own pocket, all of the back issues of the Legion. Several hundred dollars out of his own money. He bought them all, *all* of them, even the very early ones back when they were a super-hero club with the patches on their arms. He really is excited about it because, as Len said, it is a self-contained entity. He has told me in letters that if there are ever any plans to do another Legion mini-series or special tabloid, he wants to write them.

OUTPOST: Do you think he's going to be receptive to the fan press, the vocal segment of Legion fandom?

BARR: I think so. I think he always reads his mail. Whether he'll follow it or not is another matter.

OUTPOST: Reading it is rare enough.

WEIN: He'll be influenced by it. He'll read it, certainly—he always does. Whether or not he'll be influenced by it depends on how intelligent the letters are.

OUTPOST: If he has all the back issues, he'll realize that there are a lot of contradictions in continuity. Will he follow the most recent versions or go back to the source? Recently, various Legionnaires' powers have been misused or arbitrarily changed from issue to issue . . .

WEIN: Knowing Roy, he'll find a way to solve that problem—he'll probably devote whole stories to explaining that sort of thing. This is the man who created the All-Star Squadron and the Invaders to fix things up from before we were born!

OUTPOST: Do you think that is actually a wise idea, though, to be so concerned with the continuity that nobody remembers . . .

WEIN: You just were, weren't you?

OUTPOST: Yes, *we're* interested because we've been following the book for ten or twenty years. The average fan has not been following the continuity from twenty years ago. When you start exhuming continuity problems from *that* far back, is it really of interest to current readers?

WEIN: I can only go by my own rule of thumb, which is basically this: I go over all the past stuff—working on the **Green Lantern Corps** book with Mike, or **The Legend of the Batman**, or a dozen different projects like that—I sit down and go over

all the back issues, then I decide which ones I like, and that's what I use. Period.

BARR: The way Roy's mind works is, if he goes through all the back continuity, he gets tons of story springboards which don't necessarily have to relate to—I'm saying this clumsily but you'll understand it—The cover feature is not *"THIS ISSUE: Why Cosmic Boy's Costume Was Colored Wrong Eight Years Ago!"* but he'll use that as a springboard to a whole different story.

OUTPOST: You're planning to change Cosmic Boy's dreadful costume to something more sensible, is that correct?

WEIN: Immediately. The very first thing we all decided, the very first thing Roy does in his very first issue, he is to change the costume! All it requires is doing this: Draw a black line right there [motioning across his throat] and put a different color on all the flesh parts.

BARR: I want to change the logo, too.

WEIN: Yeah? Seriously?

BARR: Yeah. I hate that! Look at that thing. I want to do a logo in the same type style as the 'L' on the Legion clubhouse.

WEIN: The problem is, it might not necessarily look futuristic enough. But I'm not crazy about the current Legion logo as it is, because I think it's about to fall over.

BARR: It looks fine for the X-Men, because that's two words. But for umpteen letters and four words, it sort of jumbles together on the newsstand.

OUTPOST: Speaking of which, let's move along to our controversial questions. Will you be able to resist the temptation to imitate the X-Men?

WEIN: It'll be real easy. I don't think any of us have ever *had* any temptation to copy the X-Men. I *created* the new X-Men! It doesn't bother me much. I never considered copying the X-Men in the Legion. I consider the Legion a *radically* different kind of comic book from the X-Men. I also co-created the new Teen Titans, which is the one everyone says is a take-off on the X-Men. And having created both books—trust me! It's not! We had no X-Men in mind when we did the Titans! We just wanted to do a better Titans.

BARR: And I've never been that crazy about the new X-Men . . . sorry, Len.

WEIN: It's okay. I don't write them any more. Not in five years.

OUTPOST: We also have an obligatory question—what about the Adult Legion story?

WEIN: We've had some thoughts about that. We think it's a big pain in the ass. But Roy has some ways of getting around it.

OUTPOST: Well, there are obvious ways of getting around it—alternate futures—and yet, I see you're tying into it even closer with the forthcoming Reflecto story.

WEIN: That doesn't necessarily mean anything. If Reflecto does not die, for example, if he takes an entirely different path, then we have changed the future, haven't we?

Photo by Brenda Mings

Above: Mike Barr (l) and Len Wein (r), modeling the latest in plaid fashions . . .

BARR: My feeling is—though I may change this tomorrow—is that we could do an alternate future, and that would be okay, but I'd *prefer*—and also I think this would appeal to Roy, knowing the way his mind works—to say that all of the Adult Legion continuity *does* happen in the future, to let that continuity take place, and then to go on from there. Gerry, before he left the book, was talking about doing *another* adult Legion story with Superman. And I kinda like the idea, to tell you the truth.

OUTPOST: That's going to open a can of worms. But won't you be creating a pain in the ass for the people who write the Legion twenty years from now, just as the previous one is for you?

BARR: Well, if you don't care about the stuff, of course it's a pain in the ass. But Roy obviously does care—I care, and Len cares. That's why we establish continuity! Because we do think of these guys as real people, and their lives have continuity.

OUTPOST: We get the impression that Roy might be keeping track of them with scorecards.

WEIN: He probably will by the time he's done. Roy is amazing—on All-Star Squadron, he sent me twenty extra pages on top of everything—he had done astrological charts on all of the members of the All-Star Squadron, and for everyone who might eventually become a member. He's not as into it as Steve Englehart, but his fiancee is more into it, and they worked out generally from what's been in the past, what these characters would logically be astrologically, and then what the traits of that particular sign would be. He's going to write them based on that, so they'll have have different personalities.

OUTPOST: Strange you should mention that. One of our contributors has done exactly the same thing with the Legion [see "Born Under A Triple Sun," page 35].

WEIN: Send it to Roy! Send it to us! We'll use it! It's what's really making the All-Star Squadron work! They're all different, their personalities are true to their sign, even though none of this will ever be mentioned in the stories.

BARR: It would not surprise me at all if Roy had literally made up scorecards. I don't think I could emphasize this too strongly: when Roy takes over a book, he takes over everything about it. I

have no idea what he'll do with the technology of Thirtieth Century Earth or the way it relates to other planets, but I'm sure he'll do something with that.

OUTPOST: In the five years since the last issue of **The Legion Outpost** was published, organized fandom and the fan press have grown dramatically in importance to the comics companies. Do you plan to play the book toward that market at all?

WEIN: No. I've rarely aimed a book at the fan market or the direct sales market. Occasionally, when a book is selling very poorly . . .

OUTPOST: Do you purposely *not* aim it at the fan market?

WEIN: I never purposely aim anything anywhere. [Mike Barr inserts the appropriate bathroom joke.] A book that's selling very poorly—a book that's had problems like **Weird War** or **Unknown Soldier**, I try to make adjustments hoping the fan market direct sales will pick up. Both those books have almost no direct sales, although they have pretty fair newsstand sales. But direct sales make a great difference to the books' standing with the company now. So I have a three-part Walt Simonson/David Michelinie *Captain Fear* coming up in **Unknown Soldier**, preceded by a three-part John Severin *Enemy Ace*. And we've got the series running now in **Weird War**, *Creature Commandos*, the *Robot G.I.*, and the *War That Time Forgot*—we just had a Dave Cockrum *War That Time Forgot* story—in the hopes that they'll help some of the direct sale. But for a book that's doing well—and the Legion is doing pretty well—there's no reason to aim it specifically, any more than we specifically aim the Teen Titans for the direct sales market. If we do it well, it will sell well.

OUTPOST: How do you look at organized Legion fandom?

WEIN: Organized Legion fandom. I find them a source of potential story ideas and a source of potential grief. I think organized Legion fandom—at least until X-Men fandom came along—was probably the most vocal and aggressive comics fandom. And that's why we've got doors, and why we're hiding behind them.

Legion fandom helps, because we get feedback, and I think any book needs feedback. With some of the books that get the least mail, you don't have the give and take, you don't know if people like what you're doing, so you just sort of continue down the same path. Books like the Legion, which have good mail and a good solid fandom, at least they give you some idea what you're doing that people like or dislike. Whether the editor or writer agrees or not is superfluous. I'm doing a story—for argument's sake, for the Legion—and all of Legion fandom writes in, *en masse*, and says it's rotten. But if I like it, I'm still going to go with it because the bottom line is my opinion. That's what DC is paying me for. But at least the letters and opinions give me the idea that I'm *getting* to people and they're responding to it. I always look for that in my writing. The stuff is written to get reaction—good, bad, or indifferent.

BARR: To that, I would also add that I look toward Legion fandom for story ideas and also, as we mentioned earlier, I'm very much interested in seeing what they think of the characters. I know the characters—that is, I know who they are and, pretty much, what they do, but I haven't lived with them for years and years like a lot of Legion fandom has. So any insights that they might be able to present, I'd be more than happy to see.

An Open Note of Suicide

By KIM METZGER

To whom it may concern:

The chances of anyone ever reading this note I now pen are probably quite slim. That I should bother to write it at all is a grand exercise in futility. Yet write it I must, for ego will not permit my slipping from life so quietly. Too, it seems traditional that suicide victims leave something behind to tell their fellows exactly why they are killing themselves.

Know then, if this self-made eulogy *has* survived for reading, that at this moment I am seated upon a sizeable keg of TNT, to which is attached a long, slow-burning fuse. In approximately one-half hour I shall refute T.S. Eliot (from my viewpoint, at least) by ending things with a rather noticeable bang. In all likelihood this note shall accompany me to a comparable end, but, as I said, pride dictates that I try to communicate the reasons for my self-imposed demise.

Let me begin by saying that I blame no one but myself for my misery. I'm neither rejected lover nor social outcast. No, it is my own hand that sparked the events which led to these, my final moments. Indeed, I feel somewhat akin to Dr. Frankenstein, tampering with unfamiliar forces out of the best of intentions, only to see them careen uncontrollably, wreaking havoc undreamed of. Ah, but I tell too much too soon. Better to start with the very origins of my tragedy.

It was the summer of 1968. I had happily purchased a copy of **Adventure Comics** #374, featuring my favorite super-group, the Legion of Super-Heroes. Eagerly, I ran home and read the story. Having then fully savored it, I casually flipped to the letters page to glimpse its contents. And there it happened. My attention was riveted immediately to one particular letter:

Dear Editor:
In Adventure No. 368, Bobby Hitchman mentioned that the super-heroes' costumes covered almost their whole bodies. I agree. Couldn't the heroines' costumes be a little more . . . well . . . a little less?
A Reader, Belmont, Calif.

[Who are you thinking of? Saturn Girl? Take a look at Dream Girl, Shadow Lass and Princess Projectra. If their outfits were much smaller, we might not get them past the Comics Code. — Ed.]

By God!, I thought. What a challenge, for indeed a challenge in my mind had been made: To design a costume with less material than any current one, yet still capeable of passing the Code. The thought aroused my creativity. The die was cast. I would design such a uniform.

And my subject? Why, the one suggested in the letter's reply, that frump of the Thirtieth Century, Saturn Girl! I had always held a secret passion for her, anyway. She was so unlike the typical heroine of those days, the Nervous Nellies who cringed behind the nearest male hero for salvation. Why, she had even taken the unprecedented step of *leading* mostly male Legion. But that uniform . . . an eyesore for all centuries. Something had to be done about it, and *I* would be the one to do it!

But not immediately. I had started a few designs, but they were jests, making Imra seem to have just stepped from the nearest strip house. Before I could devote my full attention to serious design, school reopened for the fall term and I shelved my plans in favor of homework.

Alas! Would that they had remained shelved. I might even now enjoy life's happiness. I might yet . . . but no. Time grows too short to waste in self-persecution. I must finish my story.

It was an event unrelated to these just described that reminded me of my wretched challenge. About a year after my inspiration, I learned that costume designs were being requested by the editors of **Adventure**, not for the Legion but for **Adventure**'s *new* tenant, Supergirl. Just as a lark I decided to try my hand. I grabbed pencil and carbon paper (I am no artist—I traced a figure and then added my design to it) and began. Basing my design on a cutaway outfit worn by Diana Rigg on *The Avengers*, I soon had a design that satisfied me.

Above: Artist Mercy Van Vlack's rendering of Saturn Girl in the costume Kim Metzger designed, and the original Diana Rigg outfit that "inspired" him.

"LESSON FIFTEEN: JUST AS YOU PREPARE TO EMBARK ON A DANGEROUS MISSION, TURN TO YOUR HUSBAND AND SAY, 'I'M WEARING NOTHING UNDER MY UNIFORM . . .'"
TOTAL SUPER-WOMAN
♀

And then, the fatal moment. I recalled my plans for Saturn Girl; the cutaway pattern, I realized, would indeed be lesser than the basic tank suit then in vogue, so I used it once more. At first, this produced what resembled long johns with gaping moth-holes at either side. After some experimentation, I separated the leggings from the trunk to form a pair of high boots . . . another first, I believe, for a super-heroine's uniform. (One difference: my final design, as I recall it, had white boots with red trim. An anonymous DC colorist reversed that color scheme—to a superior effect, I'll agree.) The sleeves I turned into gloves, baring shoulders and back save for a necessary strap. One last alteration: Imra's Saturn insignia was moved from her chest, by cursed inspiration, to become a buckle joining the costume's top and bottom halves over her navel. I looked at my creation and smiled. It Was Done. I could think of no further improvements. Immediately, I mailed my creation to DC Comics.

Time passed, and with it passed the memory of the costume design. Imagine my surprise when, in late July of 1970 (almost two years after the "challenge" was made), I found my design had been accepted with no prior warning. Surprise? Uninhibited *ecstasy* better described the feeling. With indeflatable ego, I forced copies of the magazine upon all my friends.

And then began the horror.

It started while the Legion was in semi-limbo, gone from **Action** but not yet appearing in **Superboy**. During this period of Legion dormancy, word filtered through letter columns that my success in super-fashion had inspired similar efforts by others. About this, I had no qualms. I felt there were still uniforms in need of change and myself submitted uninspired further efforts that, thankfully, never saw print. Still, designing new uniforms (I thought) was good creative exercise that could only benefit the Legion and its fans.

Then, the giant annual **Adventure Comics** #403 appeared, and realization of what I had started was upon me. This issue gave *several pages* over to new costume designs submitted by the readers. The full horror came and hit hard when I saw Karate Kid, he of the wonderfully logical, simple uniform, now bedecked in a white outfit with a ghastly symbolic hand insignia across his chest; Princess Projectra trading her regal garb for a costume suited only to the lowest class of prostitute; Night Girl in a black outfit worthy of any S&M addict; and—sacrilege of sacrilege!—Ultra Boy, whose colorful uniform and insignia virtually *is* the Legion, switching to a garb which was simply Not Him. Of course, natural jealousy caused me to loathe the revised "seasonal" Saturn Girl outfit at first sight.

For long minutes I stared, first at the fashions, then at my reflection in the mirror. How?, I asked myself, how had my single act, committed with noblest of intentions, backfired in so devastating a chain reaction? It was not that I disliked the designs for themselves, just that most of the Legionnaires bestowed them weren't the ones who *needed* a change of costume.

Yet I know there was still hope, for this fashion featurette was but a mere showcase. There was no reason to believe that these uniforms would ever be used in a Legion story proper. So I hoped.

My hope seemed rewarded at first. When the Legion made its debut in **Superboy**, the fan-spawned uniforms were nowhere in sight. A near-crisis situation developed when the Legion story in **Superboy** #183 found the Legionnaires running around on a mission in those aforementioned awful new uniforms, but future appearances returned the Legion to its status quo. The fan fashions were never seen again, and—fool that I was—I believed the crisis past.

My bubble burst when **Superboy** #193 hit the stands. Less disasterous than the earlier fan designs, artist Dave Cockrum had made badly-needed changes in uniform for Duo Damsel and Shrinking Violet. Sadly, however, he did likewise for Chameleon Boy and (again) Karate Kid, exchanging their old garb for their present-day outfits. A more sophisticated, contemporary appearance, I suppose, but my complaint was the same as before; the designs themselves were alright, but . . . somehow, the changes seemed so unnnecessary. The old uniforms, I felt, were more in tune with the Legionnaires' personalities.

More changes came in rapid succession. A pantsuit replaced Phantom Girl's old leotards; Colossal Boy's maganificent, colorful outfit fell to muscle-accentuating clothing; Timber Wolf lycanthropically altered his face to resemble his namesake; Element Lad, Princess Projectra (who positively defies the law of gravity), Dream Girl, Star Boy and most of the others made changes to varying degrees of success or satisfaction.

I suppose it was all for the best; a new look for a new audience and a new decade, the 1970s. But ever since those new uniforms were introduced, it just doesn't seem like the Legion I knew. And I live with the knowledge that I am responsible. Whatever it is about the Legion that seems different now, that something had its birth with my Saturn Girl uniform. I cannot bear to watch anymore.

Know this, dear reader, if you are there. I ask no forgiveness; I deserve none. Rather, I deserve perhaps pity, perhaps contempt from my fellow Legion fans. Whatever. It shall soon matter no longer.

One last warning: if this note does survive, share it with the world. Let those who sneer at a super-hero's costume with dreams of changing it—recall my success and remember only the wretchedness it brought me.

The fuse is nearly gone. My misery is at an end. And so I say . . .

*FZZZZ . . . *sputter*

(Oh Christ, the damned thing fizzled out again.)

To whom it may concern:

Please disregard this note until I can afford another fifty feet of fuse. Thank you.

A LEGION OF WRITERS

By RICH MORRISSEY

Few comics features have had as diverse a collection of writers as the Legion of Super-Heroes. During its eighteen near-continuous years of publication, it has been written by the creator of super-hero comics, a prominent science fiction author, two writers who went on to become major decision-makers at DC and Marvel Comics, one of the most highly-acclaimed writer-artists of recent years, and more—including at least two writers who were later to assume editorship of the Legion. Few (if any other) features can make such a claim.

NOTE THE MANY STRANGE TROPHIES IN THIS SUBTERRANEAN CHAMBER!
THE JOKER... THE PENGUIN...! I SEE BATMAN HAD HIS SHARE OF UNIQUE ADVERSARIES! I CAN HARDLY WAIT TO MEET HIM IN MY OWN TIME! BUT NOW TO GET DOWN TO BUSINESS...
© 1965 DC Comics Inc.

Adventure Comics #341, February 1966
Script: Jerry Siegel

Appropriately, when the Legion was awarded its own series beginning in **Adventure Comics** #300, its first regular writer was **Jerry Siegel**—appropriately because, as most fans know, it was Siegel who was responsible for the very concept of the comic book super-hero. Siegel had an odd sense of humor that came across very well in his later work (notably the *Bizarro World* series that had preceded the Legion in **Adventure**) but his humor was generally less-suited to the Legion itself. Siegel was also heavily steeped in Mort Weisinger's "Superman family" mythos, which led to his heavy use of established supporting characters from the other Superman titles; Lex Luthor, the Phantom Zone criminals, and even the Bizarros popped up in Legion stories. As a result, Siegel's Legion was frequently amusing, but tended to be unevenly plotted. Siegel remained the Legion writer for only six issues—**Adventure Comics** #300 through 305, and wrote just a few isolated issues thereafter (#320-23, 325, 328-31, 338, and 340-41). His best-remembered story was probably his last: the "Computo the Conqueror" two-parter in **Adventure** #340-41.

Starting with **Adventure** #306, the Legion's regular writer was **Edmond Hamilton**, who wrote all the stories through **Adventure** #345 except those done by Siegel. Hamilton had begun his career as a succeseful science fiction writer, specializing in space opera, and had done a good deal of writing for Mort Weisinger during Mort's own days as an sf editor. He came into comics when Weisinger took over the editorial reins of the Superman and Batman comics, continuing to work off and on for Weisinger, and for Julius Schwartz on occasion, well into the 1960s.

Edmond Hamilton brought his space-opera expertise to the Legion, writing some very well-plotted stories (if somewhat weak in terms of characterization) featuring imaginative alien societies and pseudo-scientific concepts. My own favorite from among his Legion stories is the "Starfinger" two-parter in

IN THE SCIENCE FOUNDATION OF SKOR, SCIENTIFIC WIZARDRY IS PERFORMED!
WE'VE FOUND THAT MEN FROZEN TO DEATH CAN BE REVIVED BY THE POWERFUL RADIOACTIVE FORCE IN THAT CAPSULE, WHICH STARTS FROZEN CELLS FUNCTIONING AGAIN!
IF IT ONLY WORKS!
© 1963 DC Comics Inc.

Adventure Comics #312, September 1963
Script: Edmond Hamilton

Adventures #335-36, though "The Legionnaire Who Killed" from #342 was notable for his unusually fine characterization.*

By a great stroke of good fortune, just as he was losing the services of Siegel and Hamilton, Weisinger received an unsolicited Legion manuscript from a 13-year-old reader, **Jim Shooter**. Although Shooter, unlike his predecessors, had no

*** Hamilton did not abandon mainstream science fiction during this time, and continued to write space opera and sometimes more personal stories, such as the critically-acclaimed "What's It Like Out There?" In the course of his career, he met and married another sf writer, Leigh Brackett, who was herself beginning to find a new career in movie screenplays in the mid-1960s. In 1966, Hamilton left DC to follow his wife to Hollywood where he remained, writing films and occasional sf stories, until his death in 1977. Brackett, of course, had completed the first-draft screenplay for "The Empire Strikes Back" before she died about a year later.**

WE MUST GIVE UP THE KEY! WE CAN'T CONDEMN FIFTEEN MILLION PEOPLE TO DEATH! YOU'RE ACTING LEADER, SUPERBOY! GIVE THEM THE KEY!
NO! THEN WE'D CONDEMN THREE HUNDRED BILLION PEOPLE TO SLAVERY UNDER THE FIVE!
THEY'D TAKE OVER THE ENTIRE UNIVERSE!
WE MUST SACRIFICE METROPOLIS.. FOR THE GOOD OF THE GALAXY!
BUT MY PARENTS LIVE HERE! THEY'LL DIE!
SHUT UP! ALL OF YOU!
I CAN'T SIGN THE DEATH WARRANT OF FIFTEEN MILLION PEOPLE!
BUT I CAN'T SURRENDER THE UNIVERSE TO THE FATAL FIVE, EITHER...
SOMEHOW, WE MUST FIND ANOTHER COURSE QUICKLY! TIME IS RUNNING OUT!

© 1968 DC Comics Inc.

Adventure Comics #366, March 1968
Script: Jim Shooter

professional writing experience, Weisinger liked his story and bought it, and soon took the unprecedented action of hiring young Shooter as the new regular Legion writer. Shooter's first story appeared (out of sequence) in **Adventure** #348 (preceded by his second story, a 2-parter in #346-47) and, aside from a few fill-in stories, Shooter continued to write Legion stories through its last appearance in **Adventure** (#380) and on through the first part of its brief stint as backup in **Action Comics** (#378, 380-82, and 384). Shooter also tried his hand at other Weisinger features, including Superman, Supergirl, Jimmy Olsen and the short-lived Captain Action, but most of his writing was for the Legion until he left comics in 1969.

Five years later, **Legion Outpost** editor Harry Broertjes traced Jim Shooter to his Pittsburgh home; the resulting interview in **Outpost** #8 initiated a sequence of events that brought Shooter back to the field he had left in his late teens. Shooter was assigned some Legion stories in the feature's new home, **Superboy** (gradually retitled **The Legion of Super-Heroes**). His second-generation stories appeared in issues #209-15, 217, and 219-24. He found new editor Murray Boltinoff much harder to work with than even the hard-nosed Weisinger, and his experience writing a few new Superman stories for Julius Schwartz was also less than fully rewarding. Shooter turned to Marvel Comics where, in 1976, he was offered an associate editorship that required him to drop his Legion and other DC assignments. Since then, he has risen in the Marvel ranks to become Editor-in-Chief and one of the most controversial figures in comics today.

Controversial or not, Shooter is still considered by most Legion fans (including myself) to be the best all-around writer the strip ever had. He successfully combined the space opera and good plotting sense of Ed Hamilton with the strong characterization and action of the Marvel titles that had so impressed him as a fan, building up a continuity and a wide variety of complex personalities that previous Legion stories had barely hinted at. He also introduced some of the Legion's most memorable villians: the Fatal Five and Mordru in particular. Mordru's first appearance, a serial in **Adventure** #369-70, is considered by many to be the "perfect" Legion story. Shooter was responsible for many other fine works—the first Fatal Five serial in **Adventure** #352-53 (which culminated in the classic death of Ferro Lad), the "Outlawed Legionniares" two-parter in #359-60, and (not to neglect his more recent stories) the first appearance of Stargrave in **Superboy** #224—a villain who (like Mordru) was regrettably ill-treated in subsequent writers' hands.

VERY CLEVER TO HIDE OUT ON THE VERY PLANET YOU WIPED OUT.
...BUT YOU NEVER SHOULD HAVE ESCAPED FROM PRISON ... YOU WERE SAFE FROM ME THERE!
I NEVER FORGOT WHAT YOU DID TO MY PEOPLE ...AND MY PARENTS!
SUDDENLY,
JAN--WAIT!
DON'T INTERFERE, LEGIONNAIRES! I'M SURRENDERED TO ME! HE'S MINE!
HE'S HOLDING A DEATH-RAY GUN ON ROXXAS!
SO BRING HIM TO JUSTICE, JAN! TURN HIM OVER TO THE LAW!

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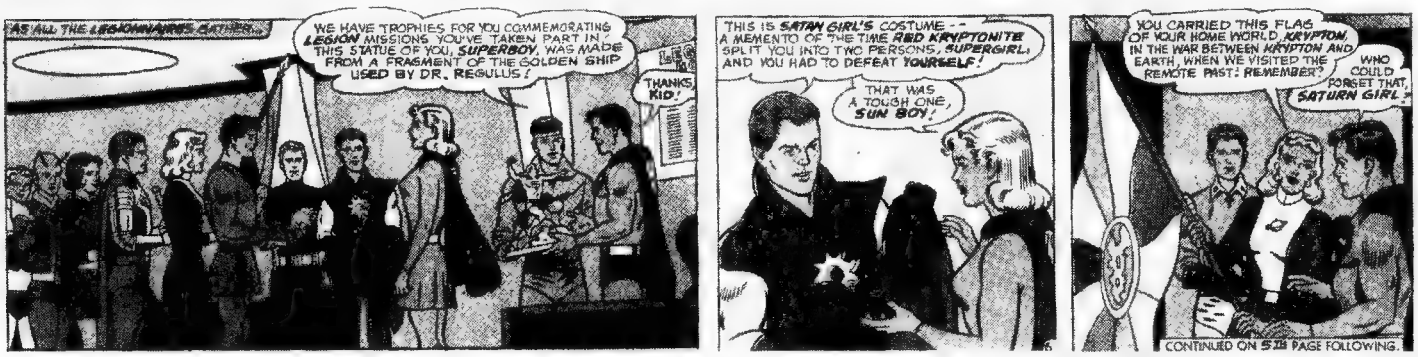
Superboy #211, September 1975
Script: Jim Shooter

Backing up a bit, all but one of the non-Shooter fill-in stories of the later **Adventure** issues were written by **E. Nelson Bridwell**, an older fan who was offered an assistant editorship by Weisinger in 1964. He wrote the Legion stories in **Adventure** #350-51, and 356; **Action** #379, 383, 385-87, and 390-91; **Superboy** #147, 172, and 176; and plotted the recent **Secrets of the Legion of Super-Heroes** three-shot. Bridwell's work for the Legion, as for most features, has been characterized by decent if unspectacular plots, painstaking attention to continuity, and low-key but accurate characterization. Few real classics have come from his typewriter, but few bad stories have, either—his "The Tyrant and the Traitor," in **Action Comics** #390-91, was one of the best Legion stories written by anyone. In general, though, Bridwell has been a fill-in writer only, and is now concentrating on his continued duties as Julie Schwartz's associate editor on the Superman titles and his writing on Captain (*Shazam!*) Marvel in **World's Finest** and the Earth-2 Superman in **Superman Family**.

Rounding out the Legion's **Adventure** run is "The Six-Legged Legionnaire," the second story in #354, which was


AS ALL THE LEGIONNAIRES GATHER...
WE HAVE TROPHIES FOR YOU COMMEMORATING LEGION MISSIONS YOU'VE TAKEN PART IN! THIS STATUE OF YOU, SUPERBOY, WAS MADE FROM A FRAGMENT OF THE GOLDEN SHIP USED BY DR. REGULUS!
THANKS, KID!
THIS IS SATAN GIRL'S COSTUME -- A MEMENTO OF THE TIME RED KRYPTONITE SPLIT YOU INTO TWO PERSONS, SUPERGIRL AND YOU HAD TO DEFEAT YOURSELF!
THAT WAS A TOUGH ONE, SUN BOY!
YOU CARRIED THIS FLAG OF YOUR HOME WORLD, KRYPTON, IN THE WAR BETWEEN KRYPTON AND EARTH, WHEN WE VISITED THE REMOTE PAST! REMEMBER?
WHO COULD FORGET THAT, SATURN GIRL?
CONTINUED ON 5TH PAGE FOLLOWING.

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Adventure Comics #350, November 1966 — Script: E. Nelson Bridwell

PRESENTLY
THE VIBRATIONS OF SUPERBOY'S VOICE CHANGED THE MOLECULAR STRUCTURE OF ELEMENT SIGELLIAN, RENDERING IT HARMLESS!
I...FEEL FINE, AGAIN!
10
© 1959 DC Comics Inc.

Adventure Comics #267, December 1959
Script: Otto Binder

written by another veteran of the comic book field, **Otto Binder**. Although this was his only story for the Legion during its run as a regular features (and not a particularly good one at that), tribute must be paid to Binder's association with the Legion, which actually went back to its first appearance in **Adventure Comics** #247, and continued with many of its irregular appearances until it was granted a permanant monthly home in **Adventure** #300. Binder, who remained at DC until 1969 and died five years later, really deserves to be remembered for his other work—his science fiction stories (including his creation of Adam Link, one of the first benevolent robots in fiction) and his comic books for many different companies (particularly his Captain Marvel for Fawcett)—than for his late, lackluster Legion work.

...WHERE THIS DAY IS ONE FOR CELEBRATION...
WELL, SUN-BOY, HOW DOES IT FEEL TO BE 11 SOLA-YEARS OLD?*
SENSATIONAL! WHEN MY BUDDIES THROW A SURPRISE BIRTHDAY BASH LIKE THIS!
WAIT'LL YOU SEE THE PRESENT WE HAVE FOR YOU!
*EDITOR'S NOTE: 11 SOLA-YEARS IS ROUGHLY THE SAME AS 11-15 OF OUR YEARS!
© 1972 DC Comics Inc.

Superboy #191, October 1972
Script: Cary Bates

A third fan brought into the business by Mort Weisinger was **Cary Bates**, a college student who began by sending in cover ideas in the mid-1960s, and sold his first Superman story in 1967. He concentrated largely on Superman and other features, not touching the Legion until Shooter had left and Weisinger, himself on the verge of retirement, was short of writers for the strip. Bates wrote only two Legion stories for Weisinger, in **Action**s #389 and 392, but that was enough experience for him to become the regular Legion writer after Murray Boltinoff moved the feature to **Superboy**. His stories appeared in **Superboy** #173, 183-84, 188, 190-91, 193, 195, 197-209, 211, 214-16, 218, 220 and 222.

Like Hamilton, Bates was also heavily plot-oriented and his stories were lacking in characterization [see Bates' own essay on the subject of "Action Over Characterization . . . For Now" in **The Legion Outpost** #5], but his stories also often lacked the scope and imagination of Hamilton's. To be fair to Bates, he was never very interested in writing the Legion, and seemed to have difficulty fitting so many heroes into one story—and just to get them into a setting outside the Legion clubhouse was a challenge under Murray Boltinoff's demands that a concise plot be condensed into as short a story as possible. At his best, as in "The Fatal Five Who Twisted Time" in **Superboy** #198 and "The Legionnaire Bride of Starfinger" in #200, Bates constructed an engrossing story that a skilled artist (like Dave Cockrum, whose stint as Legion artist and co-plotter from issues #184 to 202 was all too brief) could tell to its best advantage. But even then his Legion stories seemed to be missing a certain credibility. It was on Superman, and then the Flash, that Cary Bates has been allowed to utilize his talents to the fullest.

THE LEGIONNAIRES SWING INTO ACTION INSTANTLY--THOSE WHOSE SUPER-POWERS SUIT THE OCCASION USE THEM--
--AND THOSE WHOSE POWERS DO NOT CARRY ON WITH THEIR COURAGE ALONE...
AND THAT IS MORE THAN ENOUGH!
© 1976 DC Comics Inc.

Superboy #225, March 1977
Script: Paul Levitz

When Joe Orlando became managing editor of DC Comics in 1976, some of the editorial sssignments were reshuffled. Denny O'Neil replaced Murray Boltinoff as editor of **Superboy**. The book needed a new writer as well—Bates had happily eased himself off the Legion upon Shooter's return, and when Shooter left for Marvel, the assignment ultimately fell to **Paul Levitz** who, like Shooter, had also started in the business as a teenager. A New York fan who had published a fanzine called **Etcetera** (later combined with **The Comic Reader**) Levitz became a regular visitor at the DC and Marvel offices to gather news; eventually he was offered a position as Joe Orlando's assistant. By the time he'd worked his way up to writing the Legion, he had also been promoted to Editorial Coordinator of the entire DC line. But as a long-time Legion fan, Levitz gladly accepted the assignment with **Superboy** #225 and continuing through #251, missing only #227, 232, 234 and 249. While not as deft a plotter as Shooter or Bates, Levitz had a much keener grasp of continuity and characterization than his immediate predecessors were allowed to demonstrate, and he was probably the best all-around Legion scripter after Shooter. Hamilton's work might have been more satisfying more of the time, but when Levitz was at *his* best, as in the five-part "Earthwar" serial in **Superboy and the Legion of Super-Heroes** #241 through 245, he surpassed all but the very best of Shooter's stories.

However, Levitz found himself increasingly busy with other duties as he rose through the corporate ranks—which ultimately forced him to drop all of his writing and editing duties, save the short *Huntress* feature in **Wonder Woman**. As a result, even during his earlier days on the Legion, there were frequent appearances by other fill-in writers. **Gerry Conway**, who had begun his career by selling mystery stories to DC in the late 1960s and went on to write most of the major features and characters at both major companies, filled in for Levitz on **Superboy and the Legion of Super-Heroes** #227, 232, 234, and the second story in #235. When Levitz finally left the Legion, Conway seemed to be the logical choice for his replacement, and wrote #248, 249, and all of the issues of **Superboy and the Legion of Super-Heroes** (which dropped the cumbersome "**Superboy and**" with #259) from 252 to 276, with the exception of #268.

MAYBE YOU DIDN'T MEAN ME
TASMIA'S BEEN INJURED... AND SHE'S COMATOSE!
EVEN A FIRST-LEVEL MIND COULD SEE THAT, MON-EL.
BUT AS I TOLD YOU, THIS CHEMICAL DE-SYNTHESIZER THAT I'M DEVELOPING IS OF PRIME INTEREST TO ME AT THE--
HEY!
I'M NOT ASKING YOU, MISTER, I'M TELLING YOU!
HELP MY WOMAN--NOW!
BRAINIAC'S LOWER LIP STIFFENS, BUT HE NODS--
® 1978 DC Comics Inc.

Superboy and the Legion of Super-Heroes #248, February 1979 — Script: Gerry Conway

Conway's Legion work is harder to evaluate than anyone else's, both because it is so recent and because opinions on his ability and basic talents differ so widely. He has a very high reputation among his fellow professionals, but he isn't particularly popular among fans who complain that his characterizations are often grossly inaccurate or inconsistant, his plots implausable and his sense of continuity downright poor. I tend to share the latter opinion in the case of the Legion, but I would observe that Conway's chief difficulty appears to be his failure to understand his own limitations. He has the ability to plot and develop characterizations as well as many people in the field, but he works best on single characters which he can develop by himself, like Firestorm or Scalphunter. A team book like the Legion, with so many previously defined characters who all (thanks to Shooter, Levitz, and to some extent even Hamilton and Bates) have their own subtly different personalities, is just not the sort of thing Conway does well. Even his best stories, like "The Disease That Wouldn't Die" in **S/LSH** #232 and "The Dark Man" in **LSH** #269-71, are readable but often jarring to long-time Legion fans who have come to expect more consistency in plot and characterization.

When Al Milgrom took over editorship of **S/LSH** from Denny O'Neil, a new fill-in practice wias initiated. Paul Levitz now took responsibility for *all* the plots (until he left the strip), but frequently his plots were dialogued by someone else—most commonly his friend **Paul Kupperberg**. Kupperberg dialogued Levitz stories in **S/LSH** #236 and 240-42, as well as Bridwell's plots for the three issues of **The Secrets of the Legion**. In none of them did it appear that his dialogue was any improvement over what Levitz or Bridwell would have done themselves. Kupperberg did write one unspectacular Legion story by himself: "The Arctoraan Jewel Case" in **S/LSH** #249.

Nor were Levitz's plots improved by the dialogue of **Jack C. Harris** (on another story in #240) or **Len Wein** (in #246), which were of interest mainly because of the curious fact that both Harris and Wein were later to work on the Legion in an editorial capacity. Nor was Wein's one two-part solo story (in #246-47, "A World for the Winning") particularly memorable. While reasonably well-written under the circumstances, which called for him to plot the tale in a matter of hours, it was hurt by the mischaracterization of the Fatal Five.

Of somewhat greater significance were the three Legion stories Levitz in turn dialogued, over the plots of penciller **Jim Starlin**, in **S/LSH** #239, 250, and 251. A widely-acclaimed fan artist who was even more acclaimed for his early professional work at Marvel (on **Captain Marvel** and especially **Warlock**), Starlin was brought to DC for these fill-ins by his old friend Milgrom, not because Starlin had any particular interest in the Legion but because the book was so far behind schedule. His first collaboration with Levitz ("Murder Most Foul" in #239) was unquestionably the best Legion story in quite some time—a memorable tale of how Ultra Boy was framed for murder. The follow-up in #250-51, however, was handicapped partly by a severe editing (it had been prepared for a 64-page annual and was cut to 42 pages to fit into two regular issues), but mainly by a "resolution" that was so weak and badly explained that even Conway later felt compelled to clairfy it. Starlin himself didn't seem very pleased by it, as those two issues were credited to the pseudonymous "Steve Apollo"—even though his attempt at anonymity was unsuccessful due to his distinct style, not to mention an inadvertent credit to his real name in #250's letter column

Legion of Super-Heroes #268 saw another fill-in writer: **J. Marc DeMatteis**, who had progressed from mystery comics to back-up features like *Hawkman* and *The Red Tornado*. His "Life After Life After Life" was a rather silly story that showed a lack of experience, though DeMatteis did show some potential for improvement in future stories. However, he signed a contract with Marvel shortly after writing his single Legion story, leaving DC to become the new writer of **Conan the Barbarian**.

The most recent Legion scripter is **Roy Thomas**, who will take over as regular writer with **Legion of Super-Heroes** #277. Curiously enough, Thomas was the fourth writer (along with Bridwell, Shooter and Bates) brought into the business by Mort Weisinger in the 1960s—though he stayed at DC for only a matter of days before moving to Marvel, where he became one of its most important and acclaimed writers and editors. Although none of Thomas' Legion stories has seen print at this writing, I'm optimistic about the propsects—particularly in light of his achievements on the Marvel equivalent of the Legion, the original *X-Men*.

And it's even more ironic that Thomas owes his current status as regular Legion writer to three past Legion writers—Shooter (with whom Thomas' contractual disagreements led to his departure from Marvel), Levitz (who welcomed Thomas to DC), and Conway (who arranged to trade the Legion to Thomas for **Batman**, which Thomas had been assigned and didn't want). It all goes to show, once more, what a remarkable collection of people the Legion's writers have been—and, in all probability, will continue to be.

Speculations

Dungeons and Dragons: A portrait of Orando

By PAULA O'KEEFE

Even at warp speed, Orando, the medieval world of Princess Projectra's birth and domain, is several days away from Terra. This technology-resisting distance is the spirit of the planet, psychic and spiritual as much as (indeed, more than) psychic and spiritual as physical.

In the midst of the futuristic gleam of the United Planets, Orando retains a culture we of Terra might compare to 12th Century Britain. Agrarian, feudal, violent in the simplest sword-slinging sense, it's a world right out of Dungeons and Dragons—and it *has* dungeons, *and* dragons, the latter domesticated as draft beasts and a winged variety used as war steeds.

Most important, it has magic. Alchemy, astrology and spiritualism (the art of conversing with the spirits of the dead) are the reigning higher disciplines of the Orandoans. A creative folk, proud of their books and brilliant artworks, they're also firm believers in mysticism, and the noble class of Orikalls are all astrologers and mediums. Members of the royal family are magically gifted from birth, and quite probably a prince or princess born, by some mishap, without mystic powers would not be accepted as a ruler by the Orandoans, since such a person couldn't properly interpret the stars' and spirits' wills for the public good.

Royalty is as bound by the disciplines of the mystic art as are its subjects. The Orikalls advise one and all on any important decision, since no such may be made without a favorable astrological reading and the consent of ancestral spirits; no one can marry without favorable word from the ancestors, as Projectra and Karate Kid are sadly aware; and the Princess herself was jeered by an angry mob who felt she'd brought a smog plague on them—by defying the "will of the stars"—by leaving Orando at an astrologically ill-omened time. Doorways in the Golden Palace bear the carved Spirit Signs of Life, Love, and Death overhead, as if symbolizing the over-reigning power of the spirit world even in the home of royalty.

That smog plague was especially fearsome because its black clouds blocked the Orandoans' view of the stars, severing them from the astrological foreknowlege of fate they trust as we do the evening news. Little wonder they were angry at their stray Princess for leaving them in such darkness and doubt. Of course, it wasn't her fault—Mantis Morlo did it, in **Adventure** #362—but the people's belief that angry fate sent the murk is the important point here. How do they maintain this sort of consistent faith in what we might call "non-rational causality," with the pervasive technology of United Planets worlds on every side?

(Well, *we* do, don't we?)

King Voxv, like (one assumes) each of his predecessors, holds a hard line against incursions on Orando's medieval purity. No spaceports, radios, or telescreens exist there; neither do industry in our sense, harnessed electricity, or a weapon more advanced than the broadsword. Voxv owns a Legion communicator, given him when his daughter joined the Legionnaires, but Gadron knows what he makes of the thing.

"Occasional spaceship stops" are made there, the Princess says, but they must all have to be guided down as she does the Legion craft, since no spacegoing facilities are available on-planet . . . and one doubts they're made any too welcome once down. Voxv seems calm enough with the concept of other planets, but shows no inclination to visit such planets, trade with them, or teach or learn from them. In short, it's a situation designed to keep the status quo precisely as it stands: The people fear and respect magic, and the king, as reigning Orikall, holds the highest magical authority. There's no reason for him to show any interest in other worlds or their ways.

Projectra's departure must have been a shock to her father and the entire Orikall establishment, not only because she *is* the only heir to the throne and therefore invaluable, but because of the low value she apparently places on maintaining Orandoan tradition. Even if she went with their blessing, one can't imagine a lack of grave misgivings. The departure itself must have been a lovely symbolic knot—imagine her trying to coordinate astrological charts with a sparse and infrequent spaceship schedule . . . (And imagine the shock to *her* of adapting to 30th Century Earth!)

This isn't to imply that Orando is a backward, superstitious hinterland of space. The Orikall aristocrats' mystic talents might well give them a communications network rivaling any radio web, and winged dragons make for a perfectly good air transit system. In fact, we've seen so little of what these skilled, sensitive minds can do that it's tempting to suspect Orando of housing a magically-rooted psychic academy Titan might respect. Certainly, it's likely that the psychic defenses the Orikalls could muster are as vital a part of the planet's armory as those dragon-mounted troops—Orando has turned back invasions (the Starburst Bandits', for one) who probably thought them defenseless because of their lack of spaceflight capacity—and possibly the part most trusted by the faithful believers.

But what about those faithful believers, the common folk of the planet? Plowing the fields, probably a mere jump ahead of famine, they don't get the benefits of Orikall training (or do they? Could an obviously gifted commoner kid get in?) or the hope of technological help. I wouldn't be surprised to find a revolutionary cadre determined to murder King Voxv and force Projectra, probably the first royal Orandoan with experience offworld, to become Queen, thus probably pulling Orando into closer United Planets contact. (Let's hope they've learned from the Sklaria debacle.) Just as likely, of course, are those who quake with fear at the very thought of space contact (might offend the stars!) and alien interference.

Which would be better for the Orandoans? I'd tend to favor a very gradual introduction to technology, if they are dissatisfied, under Projectra's queenship—but only in its simpler and most useful applications (medicine, agriculture), and only to the extent that it wouldn't damage the balance of magical perceptivity that could be Orando's gift to the U.P. They'd have a world of rare beauty if they could successfully combine both disciplines—which are not so different, after all. And if they *are* happy with their current lot, if anyone has the leisure to create those fine volumes and art pieces that are the world's pride, may they be left clear of the U.P. cultures as long as they choose. Powers preserve them from Federation of Planets mentalities.

It'd be Projectra's choice, of course, and with her unique experience of both lifestyles, she's probably the best-prepared monarch in Orandoan history to decide the world's future. Stars guide her when she does.

Politics on the Edible Planet

By TOM BIERBAUM

What's the political system like on Bismoll, the home planet of Matter-Eater Lad? That's a tough question to answer—seriously, anyway—because if ever a Legionnaire were a candidate for admission to the Monty Python troupe, it would be Matter-Eater Lad.

This guy just won't fit into the superhero world of ostentatious names, glittering uniforms and melodramatic dialogue. His power is, to say the least, offbeat; his name is just plain silly (though it's funny in a way more subtle then Bouncing Boy's); and even his home planet's name was undoubtedly created for its humorous effect.

Matter-Eater Lad simply defies the standards of contemporary comics and the thirst contemporary comics fans have for serious explanations. In this case, serious explanations are neither required nor appropriate.

It irritates me when unimaginative Legion writers repeatedly treat the character and his background in their usual, serious light. Still, in pondering an explanation of Bismoll and its political system, it occurs to me that maybe the planet itself, if not its Legionnaire resident, can be taken seriously. Perhaps the planet exists on a mundane, business-like level, and Matter-Eater Lad himself simply recognizes the deeper absurdity of his homeworld and his life.

Makes sense. Anyone who uses the power to eat matter in all forms to launch a super-hero career, and then gives himself the clumsy name Matter-Eater Lad, obviously has a rich sense of the absurd.

Speculations

Now, it's not unlikely that a lot of contemporary fans don't even know who Matter-Eater Lad is. It's been five years since he was "drafted" to run for public office on Bismoll, a turn of events that forced him out of the Legion (**Superboy** #212, October 1975), though more recently he returned to munch down the Miracle Machine and save the universe (**Superboy and the Legion of Super-Heroes** #251, May 1979), losing his sanity in the process.

He joined the Legion in **Adventure** #303 (December 1962). From the start, Tenzil was an insignificant member, rarely appearing, much less starring in Legion adventures. Few writers recognized the subtlety of the character's preposterous nature, and what little humor Tenzil did generate was definitely of the corn-ball variety.

He's got one of those untidy Everyone-on-my-planet-can-do-it powers that so many Legionnaires are saddled with. In this case, the explanation goes like this: Over a period of eons, microbes contaminated foods on Bismoll to the extent that all edibles were rendered poisonous. Between the mass food poisoning and the mass starvation, Bismoll wasn't a pleasant place to be in those days.

Almost everyone died—everyone except a very few who'd been born with the mutant ability to eat the contaminated food. And as the food became more and more poisonous, and natural selection took its course, the only ones left were those who could eat and survive on just about anything—locusts, prune pits, even the planet itself. It wasn't pretty, but it was all Bismoll had left.

Thus, we got a planet of humanoids who could eat matter in all forms.

I'd like to believe Bismoll was an Earth colony, to rationalize the unlikely coincidence of it being populated by humans. But the explanation for their matter-eating powers, which evolved "over eons," eliminates that possibility. Perhaps Bismoll is a colony of another human race that evolved and populated the galaxy long before Terrans did.

In any case, I think it's pretty safe to assume the Bismollians brought on their food troubles themselves. Some environmental shift must have occurred to unleash that deluge of microbes. And given the track record of intelligent life on Earth, it's fair to guess that the Bismollians themselves were the most probable catalyst for Bismoll's environmental changes.

Given this theory of Bismollian history, ecological concerns are probably central to the planet's political life. Some, cocky after their civilization survived one environmental armageddon, would support an unrestricted use of the planet for economic gains. Others, recognizing the ghastly centuries of death caused by the earlier recklessness, would advocate strict controls on what could be done to the planet.

And Bismoll is a planet that can afford to concentrate on environmental concerns. When one can just take a bite out of the back yard for lunch, the usual economic concerns don't really apply. Short-range survival isn't much of a challenge, so the planet's long-range survival can be of more concern.

Another aspect of the political system that was, at least at one time, of great interest, is the way candidates are selected to run for Bismollian office. Jim Shooter established that candidates are drafted, and thus created a unique, intriguing aspect of the Bismollian culture. But Gerry Conway blew it by borrowing the concept and assigning it to Thirtieth Century Earth, implying that it's now a routine procedure in that era. So little can be surmised specifically about Bismoll from its lottery method of candidate selection.

One interesting possibility survives, though. Under Shooter's system, people who'd rather not get involved in politics can be elected and pressured into serving. Quite clearly, Matter-Eater Lad was forced to run for office against his will. And I think he probably won the election and served under the same circumstances, finding the life of a Legionnaire preferable to that of a politician.

And perhaps, then, his current insanity is, at least in some part, being faked in order to allow him a sabbatical from his elected duties. I'd guess Tenzil will maintain the appearance of insanity for some time after he's cured, to get into a few adventures with the Legion before returning to office.

If I'm correct in guessing that Tenzil has a strong sense of the absurd, and that he'd be serving as a reluctant representative, surely his performance in office would be most entertaining. He can have as much fun as he wants, and say what's on his mind, because the worst thing that can happen is that he'd lose a bid for re-election—just what he's hoping for.

It might be like having Tom Lehrer in Congress.

As a Legionnaire and a Bismollian hero, Matter-Eater Lad must be a popular politician, and a valuable ally to any political force. So despite his possible reluctance to pursue a career in office, there'd be a lot of pressure for him to stick with it.

And if the Adult Legion stories are adhered to, he'll someday rise to his planet's presidency. But in the meantime, of course, he can spend any length of time hanging out with the Legionnaires or babbling in an insane asylum.

So there's a wide range of ways Legion writers can handle this hero, his absurd nature, his home planet and its political system, though they may well choose never to handle any of them again.

If not, let's hope they write Matter-Eater Lad with some respect for what's been established in the past, and some respect for the facets of this unique, whimsical character that make him different from any other Legionnaire.

SPOTLIGHT ON DREAM GIRL

By CAROL A. STRICKLAND

It has been noted by many Legion fans that any Legionnaire, no matter how minor or unspectacular his or her power, could be made into "the most powerful Legionnaire" if only the power were used correctly.

This means:

(1) Using their powers as the situation calls for them—no conveniently "forgotten" Legionnaires who just lurk off-panel and never get into the action when a writer lacking foresight thinks them useless;

(2) Using their powers not merely in the simplest reflection of their names—Sun Boy shining like the sun, Colossal Boy growing, Wildfire producing fiery energy blasts—but to their fullest potential, extrapolating from what's known about them to add to their repertory of powers.

(3) Most radically and undesirably, giving a Legionnaire a new power due either to conscious effort or to some type of accident, those wonderful coincidences that have blessed the Omniverse with its various Flashes, Spider-men, sonic-screeching Black Canaries, and so forth. This third option is often misused when the creators and writers of a character at hand have failed at being creative with that character's power and the things he can do. Yet sometimes option No. 3 can be useful in updating a character . . . or in carrying option No. 2 to its logical conclusion.

Case in point: Among the most-forgotten Legionnaires is Nura Nal, otherwise known as Dream Girl, whose chief role in Legion Affairs has been, indeed, *Legion affairs*; that is, as resident sex symbol. She used her sexual attraction to gain admittance to the Legion (**Adventure** #317) and has made a habit of popping into stories clad only in the wispiest of negligees. Her very name, "Dream Girl," is more a tribute to her allure than to her precognitive prowess.

Let's use option No. 2 and figure her out logically. In her first appearance she managed to charm every male member of the Legion into voting for her admittance. At the same time, she alienated every female Legionnaire into violent dislike for the new Naltorian in town. A similar recurring trait has since been seen in at least two supporting characters over the past years. We met another alien, Charma in **Superboy** #221, whose mere *presence* captured the hearts of males and sent females into screaming attack. "Apollo," who appeared in **Adventure** #350-51 as one of the Devil's Dozen, used a power of allure to sweep all females off their feet, while Lightning Lad—the only male Legionnaire around at the time—blindly charged forward to the aid of his beloved Imra . . . or was it to attack Apollo? (Apollo's "male" accomplices were probably androids who couldn't be affected by his power.)

It would seem that these three beings—Dream Girl, Charma, and Apollo—have the power to attract the opposite sex to the exclusion of all else, simultaneously making those of the *same* sex blindly murderous—toward them! This could be established as a native Naltorian trait, strong in some, latent in others. The aforementioned three have demonstrated this trait to an extraordinary degree. Nura and Apollo have obviously been trained to control it, while poor Charma was somehow cast adrift from Naltorian society and never learned how to rein her awful power. Thus, she was misused and abused all her life, became a spiteful villainess, and ultimately died. Since the

consequences of using this seemingly-innocuous power are potentially fatal, it's no wonder Dream Girl does not use it anymore.

As for her power of prediction, it has evolved since she first joined forces with the Legion. Nura has come a long way from those early days when she had to take time out to go to sleep (while the guys stood by and ogled) in order to have her visions—which were then limited to 72 hours into the future. Today's Dream Girl merely concentrates and predicts events as long as a year or more away. Clearly, she has been continuing her training, developing skills learned from the High Seer of Naltor, Beren Nal, and her sister, the Xola Aq (or White Witch). Nura packs more power into her precognitive punch than the High Seer himself. Her power is such that it should rightfully earn her the name given her counterpart in the Marvel Universe's Imperial Guard; she is indeed an "Oracle." As such, she should be used extensively as were oracles of old; to plot strategy and battle plans, and in everyday life in order to bring about certain consequences in the not-too-distant future.

Her power, operating on a subliminal level, should make her intuition infallable. Let's say she's trailing a fugitive through the sewers of Metropolis and she comes to a fork in the system. Without pausing to concentrate, she should be able to intuit that she should turn to the left in order to capture the criminal. Another case: When meeting someone, she should be able to tell from a precognitive first impression if that person is basically good or evil. Her basic feelings about a person should merit much more consideration than those of anyone else who might form an unwarranted impression, based solely on the person's physical appearance or speech pattern. Nura would make a very good detective. She could also, in all probablity, outdo that ethnic joke, Dawnstar, in tracking ability.

In recent years, the reigning powers at DC have decided that Naltorians Always Dream True. In the past, Nura has been fooled by outward appearances; she thought she'd seen a squad of Legionnaires about to be executed, but it turned out to be a squad of dummy doubles (**Adventure** #317); she dreamed that Mon-El would die, and though this prophecy came to pass, Mon's distant relative Eltro Gand ultimately sacrificed his own life-force so that Mon would live (**Action** #384). The modern-day Nura Nal has evidently refined her skills to the point where she cannot be fooled by inconclusive dream-images. Perhaps, were it to happen now, she would have been aware that Mon would be clinically dead for only a short time, and that grand-nephew Eltro was the one to worry about.

Still, imagine for a moment what would happen if Nura's dreams did *not* always come true. Imagine her being able to see the variety of *possible* futures, to be able to pick and choose from among them (much as Paul Atreides, the prophet/messiah of Frank Herbert's *Dune*, was able to do). Surely the extent of Dream Girl's training should soon allow her to break the crucial barrier between dreaming true and dreaming the possible—if she hasn't done so already (which might account for her recent lapses into a stiffling inferiority complex while she believes that she is no longer the perfect precog, not yet realizing what her new prowess means).

All this certainly qualifies Nura as an Important Legionnaire during planning sessions or in capturing criminals. What of her actual fighting ability, then? She is required, of course, to master the ordinary martial arts as part of her Legion training and ongoing education; but take a look at **Adventure** #374, in which Nura is pitted against the telepath/telekinetic Mystelor. Nura thinks, "I can predict Mystelor's every move . . . but she knows what I'll do, too, thanks to her ESP power! It's a stand-off!" Yes, for an opponent like Mystelor, Nura's ability to predict (or intuit) when an enemy will strike (or expose a weakness, or utilize a strategy) creates a stalemate. But against a non-telepath who had no overwhelming physical super-power such as super-strength, she would be practically unbeatable.

Charma . . .

In Nura's case, option #3 is not a cop-out, but rather an extension of who and what she is. In **Adventure** #351, she demonstrates a power no other Legionnaire can come compete with: She works magic. Using a spell that her sister the White Witch had taught her, Nura freed her sister from the sorcery that had turned her into the villainous Hag, one of the Devil's Dozen. Now, I'm strongly against magicians belonging to super-hero groups unless they have very specific magical powers, with very specific limitations. Otherwise, in the hands of a lazy writer, omnipotent magicians can snap their fingers and save the universe, much to the destruction of plot and general team camaraderie. Only characters such as Lilith (of the old Teen Titans, whose spells and intuitions backfired or were muddled in ambiguity as often as not) mesh successfully with a super-group. And even then, they're often best left on the sidelines so as not to overshadow the rest of the team.

What if Dream Girl were to have a very specific, very small collection of spells in her repertory? They would have to be minor ones, or else available to her only in times of direst emergency. She has already demonstrated a spell to reveal a being's true form (in **Adventure** #351), and a spell that magically sends a call to her sister for help (could that be what she was concentrating on during the final sequence in **Adventure** #370?). But as much as I like the Witch as a character, I would deplore her sorcerous power being used like the Phantom Stranger's, the Miracle Machine's, *et al*, as a potential cop-out from cliffhanger situations.

Such spells would have to have been established either in past LSH continuity (and to my knowledge, only the above two have been so established; the transformation of Light Lass's powers by "Naltorian science" was likely neither science nor Nura's work, but the White Witch's) or in some manner revealed previous to the time she really needs to use it. We can't have the Legion about to be zapped out of existance only to have Nura chirp, 'Oh, I just remembered a spell my sister taught me years ago!" and have her magick her way clear of the doom. Her spells would have to be low in strength, requiring secondary paraphernalia to carry them out (remember what it took to get the "hair from a magician's head; print of an enchanted shoe in **Adventure** #351?"), and limited in number.

But even with those limitations, what are we left with? Why, just another candidate for The Most Powerful Legionnaire Of Them All, all without changing the basic, established nature of Dream Girl's powers one iota. It just takes a little brainstorming to see the potential behind her flashy costume and sex-goddess personality. Now's the time to bring in option No. 1 and *use* this fascinating character!

The Physiological Nature of Super-Powers

Transcribed by JOE FILICE

(This monograph traces the events that led to the ground-breaking paper presented to the Intersystem Convention for the Arts and Sciences on 13 May, 2254, by Emerson Durslag, Ph.D., F.R.S., of the University of Tycho. The technical details and higher mathematics have been glossed over and often eliminated so as to facilitate comprehension by those not firmly grounded in xenobiology, xenophysiology and quantum electro-dynamics. However, the astonishing revelations, observations and theories of Dr. Durslag remain intact, a supreme intellectual achievement.)

The dramatic increase in the number of known supranormal beings existent in this galaxy early in the Twenty-Third Century, the result of expanding frontiers, rekindled the old controversy concerning their seemingly paradoxical powers. To be sure, Twenty-Third Century science could account for many of these beings, particularly those with highly developed mentalities or more efficient neurological and muscular systems. But others were in command of awesome powers requiring energy far in excess of what could be obtained through any ordinary means. Today, supranormal phenomena is unsurprising, even commonplace. Any child, after a first course in elementary physiology, can describe the processes involved in nauseating detail.

Nevertheless, to scientists of several centuries ago, this was not so trivial a question. It was a problem of inordinate difficulty. What they observed was puzzling. Clearly, these beings were making a mockery of the law of conservation of energy.

The law of conservation of energy is one of the cornerstones of physics. Almost every important result in physics can be proven to be a consequence of the fact that the energy of a closed system, one in which energy does not enter or leave, must remain constant. Or, to use cruder terms, energy cannot be created or destroyed.

Superficially, it appeared as if supranormal beings had some innate ability to thumb their noses at Mother Nature. The scientific community was reluctant to accept this and began to look more closely at the problem. Hindsight shows that there were three fundamental hypotheses from which they began their investigation:

1. The law of conservation of energy was not always valid and had to be modified to allow for the existence of supranormals.
2. Supranormals consume large amount of nutrient matter to meet their energy demands.
3. A completely different, unknown energy source was being tapped.

The first hypothesis, which was by far the most controversial, polarized the scientific community. The Traditionalist school of thought, led by Dr. Eyvind Smyth, believed the conservation law to be gospel. The other group, proudly proclaimed the Heretics by their unnoficial leader and father-figure, Dr. William Henry Friedkin, believed that supranormals transcended the constraints of our universe and siphoned energy from another, higher-dimensioned universe. They were rather vague about the details.

Eventually, Smyth and Friedkin met in a series of debates on Callisto. Smyth, slowly, over a period of days, ripped Friedkin's hypotheses to shreds with a series of beautifully conceived, logically flawless mathematical arguments. The legions of previously undecided scientists sided with Smyth, and Friedkin, now a cult of one, was a beaten but not broken man.

To say that William Henry Friedkin was an unusal man would be to make the understatement of this or any other era. He tried unsuccessfully to prove his position mathematically, using n-dimensional topology. One of his contemporaries, remaining anonymous, once described Dr. Friedkin's search as "akin to a spiral path leading into a world of total darkness right up to his own rear."

After twenty fruitless years, Friedkin committed suicide. It was a tragic waste of a first-class mind, a classic example of obsession with a single idea.

It is interesting to note that the law of conservation of energy really was not on trial here. If Dr. Friedkin had been correct, it only meant that the closed system in which energy must remain constant merely had to be expanded to include other universes. Energy could perhaps be shuffled from continuum to continuum, but the overall energy must still remain constant.

Speculations

The second hypothesis was rather frivolously made to begin with and was easily discredited. Clearly, the few thousand Calories obtainable by stuffing oneself with nutrient matter falls dismally short of the energy required by a super-being in a day of even moderate activity.

By a simple process of elimination, the third hypothesis emerged as the only realistic alternative. Unfortunately, it raised more questions than it answered. What was this mysterious "new" form of energy. Just where did it come from?

Theoreticians speculated for years about the source of this energy. Many formed the opinion that it was a mass-energy conversion on a fantastic scale. Energy and mass had been related in the Twentieth Century by Albert Einstein's law of equivalence of mass and energy. (The mass to be ascribed to a certain amount of energy is given by the relationship

$$e = mc^2$$

where e is the energy in ergs, m is the mass equivalent in grams, and c is the velocity of light in centimeters per second.) Einstein's relationship meant that, in effect, mass must be recognized as another form of energy. A particle at rest possesses energy that is proportional to its rest mass, energy that can be thought of as "energy of matter." A particle in motion has greater mass than it does when at rest, because it possesses its its rest mass as well as an added mass due to its energy of motion. This added mass is not significant unless the particle is moving at a velocity approaching that of light.

To obtain a feeling for the actual quantities involved, a few simple calculations can be performed. Consider a meal containing one thousand Calories of chemical food energy. This is roughly equivalent to 40 trillion ergs. (One Calorie is equal to 42 billion ergs.) However, five grams of matter (about a thimbleful) converted to energy yields four and a half billion trillion ergs by Einstein's equation. This is about one hundred million times the energy available through conventional means, and this is from only five grams of matter (any matter). It is no wonder that scientists were looking in this direction for an answer to their questions.

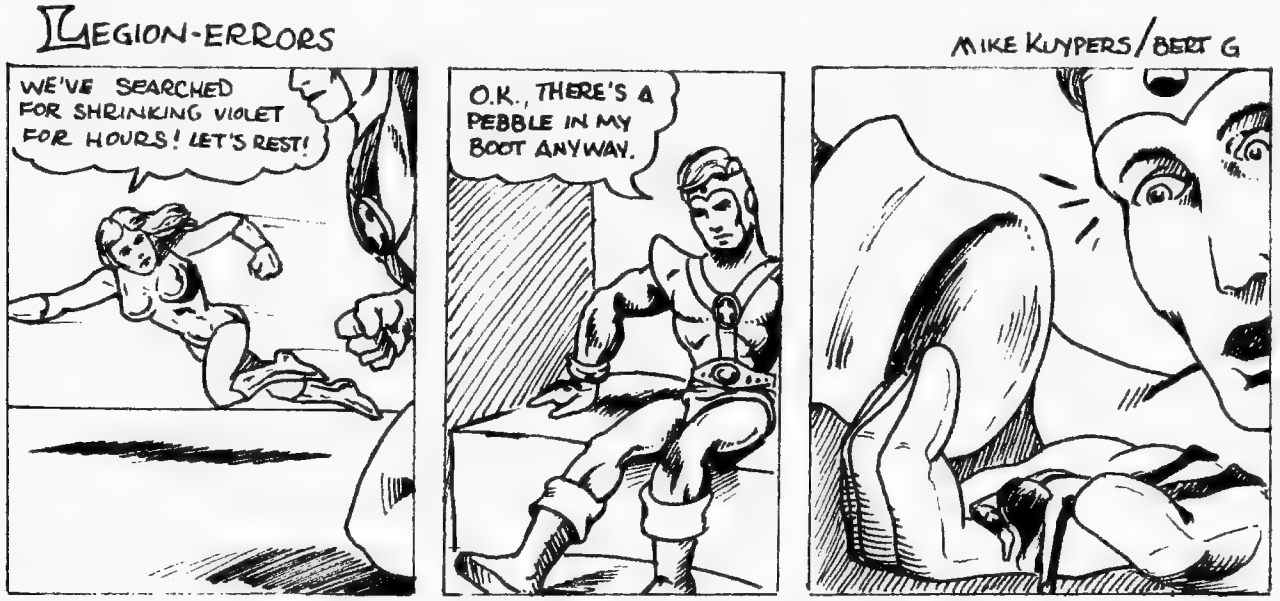
Unfortunately, the complete conversion of mass to energy was entirely beyond the horizon of Twenty-Third Century science. Fusion reactors were the primary source of power then, and they had changed little since they were perfected in the early years of the Twenty-First Century. In a fusion reactor, hydrogen nuclei are fused into helium, liberating energy because mass is lost in the process. About seven-tenths of a percent of the mass is converted to energy. It is hardly a complete conversion.

Strangely enough, with all of the theoretical speculation being tossed about, it wasn't until a young graduate student at the University of Tycho, Emerson Durslag, entered the scene that any really practical research or empirical thought was applied. In his doctoral thesis, he laid the theoretical groundwork for an investigation.

All humanoid life draws its sustenance from energy-liberating chemical reactions, primarily through the oxidation of glycogen and the breakdown of organic phosphates. These reactions are inefficient and leave reaction products—in particular lactic acid—which impair performance and result in fatigue until they can be removed or excreted from body tissues. Dr. Durslag, after performing tests on several supranormal volunteers, became convinced that the reactions within these beings weren't chemical in nature, but were mass-energy conversions. Aside from the obvious benefit of much more available energy to the possesor of supranormal abilities, there was the added bonus that the process "burns clean." Therefore, because there are no end products, there is no fatigue.

Dr. Durslag's thesis was published in 2247. His audience was skeptical but intrigued. At that point, all of the evidence in support of his theories was circumstancial. Supranormals have notoriously long life spans, and what was needed was a thorough autopsy.

Only a year after he received his Ph.D. in xenobiology, opportunity knocked for Dr. Durslag. Tyrin Kroth, the hero of a small planet in the Epsilon Eridani system, was among the victims of a global plague. Dr. Durslag managed to obtain the body. How this was accomplished has never been precisely determined, but certain high sources at the time intimated that Dr. Durslag, a member of a wealthy lunar mining family, "greased the palms of several high ranking planetary officials." (This, of course, was only a figure a speech, as Eridanians possess nothing even approximating palms.)


LEGION-ERRORS
MIKE KUYPERS/BERT G
WE'VE SEARCHED FOR SHRINKING VIOLET FOR HOURS! LET'S REST!
O.K., THERE'S A PEBBLE IN MY BOOT ANYWAY.

Speculations

Dr. Durslag naturally denied the alleged indescretions. But regardless of how it was obtained, he now had a well-preserved specimen, unlimited facilities at the university, and a choice research staff. For five years, they labored deep within the west wall of Tycho in the Arthur C. Clarke Memorial Laboratories. The public knew little about what was happening at Tycho, and cared even less. The split between those who could comprehend an increasingly complex society and those who were mastered by it had already begun, as C. M. Kornbluth had predicted in his Twentieth Century classic, *The Marching Morons*. Scientists and the well-informed everywhere were very interested, however, and when Dr. Georgette Southcraft, director of advanced studies, announced the presentation of a paper by Dr. Durslag at the 44th Intersystem Convetion for the Arts and Sciences, held on the Jovian moon Io in 2254, speculation ran rampant. Those who attended weren't disappointed.

Dr. Durslag and his associates had indeed found proof of the mass-energy conversion hypothesis. Highly specialized cellular structures were found in the muscles and organs where mass-energy conversion was taking place. Although supranormals comprised only a tiny fraction of the known galactic population, Dr. Durslag estimated that about one person in a million had the potential of becoming a super-being. If one of these beings were exposed to a traumatic stimulus of sufficient intensity, their dormant mass-energy conversion potential could be triggered to life. Or they could be killed. There was no way of predicting the outcome. Numerous occurences of this nature, known as the Shazam Phenomenon, had been well documented, but until Dr. Durslag's time they had not been understood.

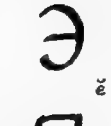
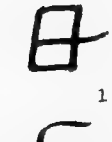
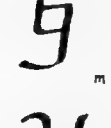
Several of today's more famous super-beings received their abilities this way, including several members of the Legion of Super-Heroes. Garth Ranzz (now Lightning Lad) became capable of generating tremendous electrostatic potentials after he was attacked by the lightning beasts of Korbal. Dirk Morgna (now Sun Boy) was able to radiate immense thermal energy after he received a severe exposure to high energy atomic radiation. In every comparable case, experiences such as these would have been invariable fatal to a normal being but, given the random chance of the right individual under the proper circumstantial conditions, super-abilities can develop instead.

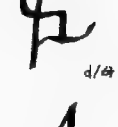
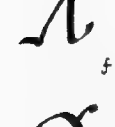
When this information filtered down through the substrata of society, several thousand misguided souls are known to have lost their lives in futile attempts at duplicating the Shazam Phenomenon.

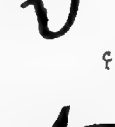
A few races possess the mass-energy capability natrually and most of these, the Rokyninans and Daxamites, for example, require only catalytic exposure to electromagnetic radiation of the proper frequency to develop super-powers.

Of course, all of the questions had not been answered by Dr. Durslag's research. There remained the probelm of beings with mass-changing powers—that is, the capability of tremendous growth or shrinkage, or shape alteration. Those questions would remain unanswered for another 50 years until the breakthroughs on Barnard's Star. But that's another story altogether.

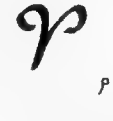
These findings by Dr. Durslag and others led directly, although not immediately, to the development of the first artificial mass-energy converter in 2527. This device, of course, is the very backbone of today's civilation. Without it, we would all almost certainly be squatting in caves in the fashion of our distant ancestors.

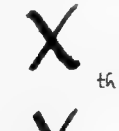
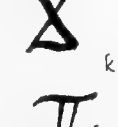
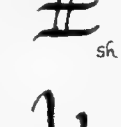
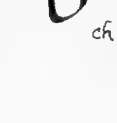






A BRIEF (AND DOUBTFUL) HISTORY OF INTERLAC AS A LANGUAGE



By ELIZABETH M. SMITH

Interlac, according to Jim Shooter, is short for "**inter**gala**c**tic language." However, if the origins of Interlac parallel those of other Terran languages, then it might have begun like this:

During the latter part of the Twenty-First Century, Interlac originally evolved as an *interlingua*, a common tongue among linguistically separate peoples for the purpose of easier communication. The language superseded a number of other artificial languages, the best known of which are Esperanto, Loglan, Picta and Swadesh.

Just as the first two World Wars and other major historical conflicts of the past were responsible for drastic upheavals in language and culture, the reason Interlac was so widely adopted can be directly attributed to the outbreaks of World Wars III and IV. In the case of the World War III, much of the language acquisition facilities developed up to that point, both technologically (as with the enormous translation laboratories developed by the Chinese) and educationally (whereby children were reading at least one language at eleven months) were destroyed in catastrophic global warfare, which effectively cut off communication between large portions of Earth and its colonies. Without a common language, or even a mixed "pidgin" tongue of some sort, *Homo sapiens sapiens Terra* (or what was left of the species) would surely have perished had Interlac not evolved from the sheer necessity to unite in order to survive. The existing artificial languages were of little use, as none of them encompassed characteristics of more than a single, isolated language family. Thus, the three forms of Interlac—High, Common, and Low—developed so that each of the three fused Terran language families could incorporate Interlac in its own unique manner.

High Interlac arose, in an attempt to devise a pidgin language of common elements, words and symbols, from the "ideographic" language family, which itself began as the *Mongolian* language family: Alsatian, Hindu, Tamil, Urdu, Tibetian, Korean, Chinese and Japanese, as well as Southeast Asian and Deep Pacific languages among others. The language they developed was based, for the most part, on *concepts*, barely touching any other aspects of communication.

The *Pederaic* language family (whose Interlac rendition later became *Common Interlac*) began as a mishmash of the Semitic and Bantu languages (including Swahili, itself artificially derived from Bantu and Arabic), the Xhosa family, known for its clicks and whistles, Athabaskan languages (in which group can be found North American Indian languages) and a reconstructed Mycaenean. The Pederaic family merged and together gave rise to a dialect form with almost all its emphasis on *syntax*; in order to express complex concepts, it had to borrow from the Mongolian language family's efforts at a proto-Interlac.

Low Interlac developed and fused in a somewhat different manner than the other two. Its roots came from the *Latinate* langauges, already close in form and orthography (English, Russian and the parent Greek, from which Latin borrowed, to mention just a few), but it did not come into widespread use until the damage wrought by World War III had been largely corrected. This form, later to become Low Interlac, was heavy on *phoneticism* and certain syntactical precepts, and was still plagued with the complexities of declension languages—that is, those like German or Russian, in which nouns, pronouns and adjectives have a variety of added suffixes to indicate case, number and gender. This form was found to be a most effective pidgin for limited interaction with isolated peoples, who could learn to use it without much trouble. While its syntax was dubious and conceptual visualization weak, it was satisfactory for initial contact.

After the effects of World War III had subsided, the reintroduction of the original separate

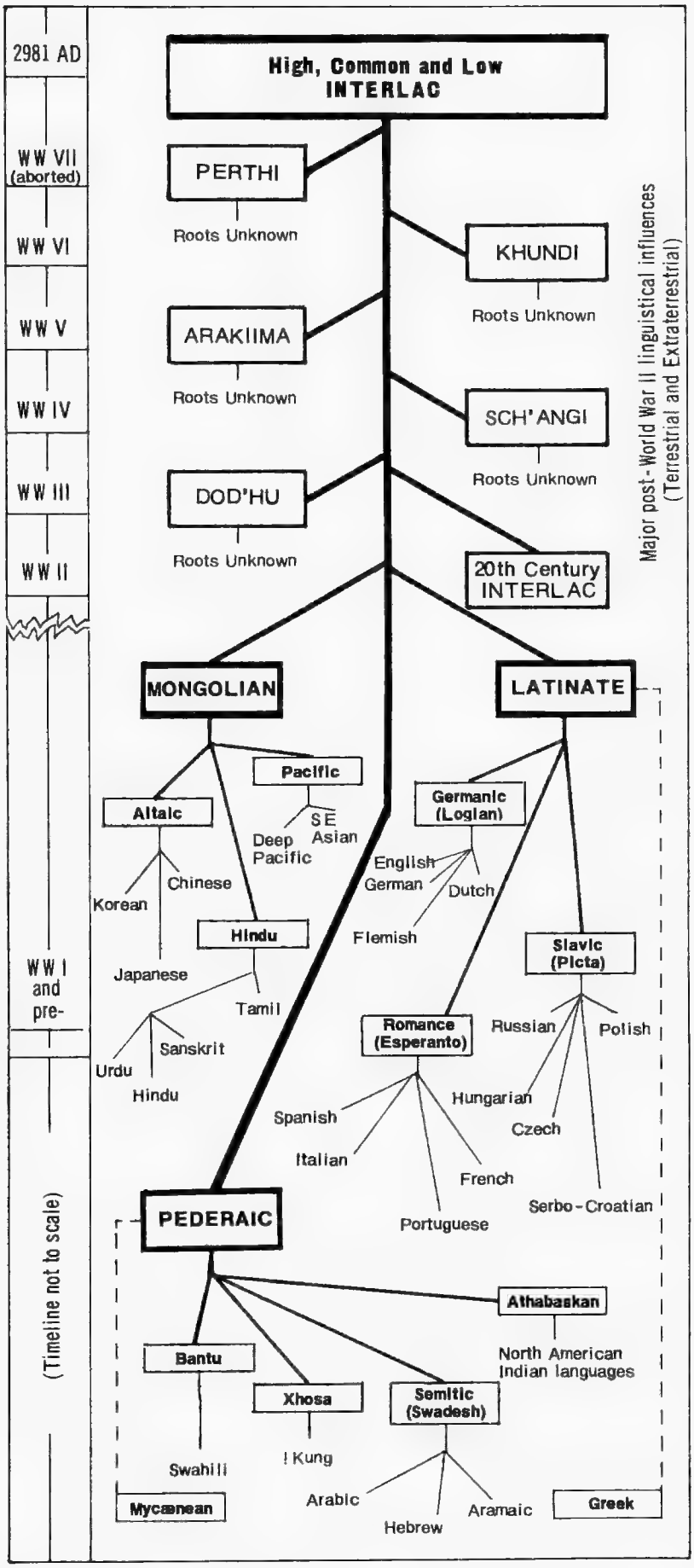
languages, a return to the roots, was inevitable. But the three forms of Interlac (as they were rapidly known; fusion was swift) became the working language again, made "official" by a dictator called Sch'angal, who decreed that Interlac would once again be the common tongue. (During Sch'angal's reign, the language was known as Sch'angi, until World War IV brought the execution of the Sch'ang family and the dynasty to an end, after which Sch'angi became known as Interlac again.)

The language changed through each of the following world wars to include *extraterrestrial* language influence (such as the apico-lateral whistle, although very few native Terrans can manage to express this sound), simplifying the three forms of Interlac as each war called for more streamlined communication. The simplification (up to the present future time, 2981) has made High Interlac virtually archaic, taking with it conceptual complexities not expressable in the more widely used Low Interlac, and only hinted at in Common.

This danger of losing a part of the language is considerable, since Common is only used in formal speech in 2981—so the few concepts it expresses are at risk of disappearing totally from the language. In her first State of the Planet speech by President Allon, for example, *five* borrowed concept-phrases had to be substituted in lieu of *two* obsolete High Interlac phrases that describe relations of the farming planets with one another. These borrowed concept-phrases now in common use are from Talok III, Cygnus V and (astonishingly) the prison planet Takron-Galtos.

Low Interlac has, of late, even begun to borrow from its own distant past. As far back as the Twentieth Century, for example, there was known to be an extraterrestrial *interlingua* in existence also known as Interlac, but used by only a very small, select group of Terrans who dealt with interplanetary traders. The Interlac known now is related to this particular extraterrestrial Interlac linguistically as *Homo sapiens* is to the pterosaurs physiologically; that is to say, by an infinitesimal percentage. The name of the language itself is virtually all that survives. But of late, convenient terms from this early Interlac have been found in use as slang among the youth, especially those with ancient history in their educational curriculum. These terms appears to be in use as a "teen language," to identify the youth among themselves and mark outsiders—and thus, perhaps soon these terms will be adopted by the mainstream language.

Whence Interlac? The recent, aborted World War VII could have triggered new changes in the language, perhaps bringing about the revival of High or Common Interlac, or their total abolition. It can only be certain that the shifting political, societal and cultural norms will always continue to cause changes in Interlac, changes that can be as great as the effects of a World War itself.



BORN UNDER A TRIPLE SUN

AN ASTROLOGICAL INTERPRETATION OF THE LEGION

By LEN ROSENBERG

Five years ago, DC Comics came out with a super-hero calendar that assigned (rather arbitrarily, I thought) birthdates to the various characters appearing in its magazines. The Legion of Super-Heroes took up a good many days of the year, as was to be expected. I recall skimming past late February or early March (around the time of my own birthday), and grumbling loudly—to the surprise of the shoppers nearby—"Humph! *No way* Sun Boy is a Pisces!"

You may gather from this that I am, in addition to being a comics fan, an astrologer.

I mean to stir no hornets nests by making this statement, but I know instinctively that I have divided you readers into two camps: the believers and the skeptics. Opposition to astrology is strong and vehement, championed by no-nonsense rational scientist types like Isaac Asimov and Carl Sagan, who seem to feel that astrology is symptomatic of the fall of civilization and the turning of humanity's brain cells into prune whip. Hitting somewhat closer to the fannish heart, the late Mort Weisinger, ex-Legion editor, once took out ads offering a large fee to anyone who could irrefutably convince him of astrology's validity. I believe the money went unclaimed.

While there are some astrologers who believe that the Sun, Moon, and planets have a direct, causal effect on the Earth's inhabitants—be it by gravitational fields, alteration of the Sun's coronal radiation, or whatever—there are equally large numbers of astrologers who favor psychologist Carl Jung's theory of *synchronicity*: that the events of a particular time share the qualities of that time, whether they occur in interplantary space or in interpersonal society, and that one can be inferred from the other without any causal relationship. However it is that astrology works, there are millions who will assert that it *does* work. While I don't expect to convince the skeptics, I do hope that they will find this article of some interest anyway for its character interpretations.

Returning to that 1976 DC calendar: I was annoyed by the birthdates given to the non-Earthborn characters; if Tenzil Kem's birth occurred on the date called February 8 on Earth, he is unlikely to celebrate his birthday on February 8 again unless Bismoll's sun-cycle is identical with Earth's, which is *highly* unlikely. The potential problems of interstellar timekeeping are immense; it seemed to me the only dates that weren't meaningless were those of the Earthborn Legionnaires, and as an astrologer, those struck me as being off-base as well.

How does one determine the astrological make-up of a fictional character? Well, first of all, you examine the personality traits exhibited by the character and work backward from there. In a case like the Legion, where a dozen writers have imposed their different interpretations, and where the emphasis has been on action over character development, it isn't easy. One aid is astrology's use of correspondences; colors, metals, parts of the body, etc. are "ruled" by different signs and planets, so a character's costume, skills, powers and origin can indicate an astrological leaning. The result need not necessarily be the individual's "Sun-sign"; we all have every sign influencing our personalities, but the sign rising, or the signs containing planets, are emphasized. A Sun in Pisces may have a "Leo-type" personality if there are many planets or the Moon in Leo, perhaps with Leo rising. So, despite my outcry, maybe Sun Boy *is* a Pisces . . . but a Fish strongly modified by Leonine influences, as you'll see.

I'm told that Steve Englehart, who is also an astrologer, searched his *ephemeris* (a listing of planet's places in the zodiac) when he was writing Dr. Strange, and chose a birthdate astrologically appropriate for the good Mage. Strange happens to be a Scorpio—a sign associated with surgery, sorcery and alcohol consumption. With no ephemerides for the Thirtieth Century, and barring an unexpected grant from a rich fan who will buy computer time to figure the planetary positions for, say, 2960 A.D., I will have to be less specific in my use of dates.

A thousand years hence, the vernal point will have moved (and the siderial astrologers with it) only halfway through the constellation of the Water-carrier. Sort of the noon-day of the Age of Aquarius. (When dealing with stars, you're dealing with *slow* effects.) The planets, in comparison, will have been whizzing by, even far-out pokey Pluto. And on the third planet from the Sun, the following Legionnaires will have been born:

Sun Boy: As the Sun is the center of the Solar system, surrounded by dependent planets, Leo—which is Sun-ruled—loves to be the center of attention, and is easy prey to flattery. Sun Boy's name and power are not the only links to Leo that Dirk exhibits; his enemy's name is Regulus—also the name of the brightest star in the constellation Leo, and gold (be it radioactive or not) is the sign's metal. I once asked Jim Shooter if he knew of these correspondences when he wrote the original Dr. Regulus story in **Adventure** #348; he said he did not. Interesting coincidence, or Jung's synchronicity?

Dirk can be bossy and patronizing (he told the Substitute Heroes: "Your organization is ridiculous!" in **Adventure** #311)

When under pressure, bossiness becomes a power complex; Dirk pulled rank in "Mutiny of the Legion" (**Adventure** #318). Leo is the showman, and when Sun Boy first joined the Legion, he wore a constant glowing aura; he probably leads the group in some amateur theatrical enterprises. He shows good deductive reasoning (Mercury in Virgo); combined with his friendship with Lightning Lad, this helped him discover Ayla's ruse when she impersonated her brother in **Adventure** #308—that, and a well-placed hand on her chest.

Dirk should be matinee-idol handsome—and more than a little vain. He'd offer unsolicted advice, and cannot admit when he's wrong, but his affection is genuine. He appreciates art, and may design as well as collect sculpture. Like most Leos, he should watch out for back and heart trouble.

Bouncing Boy: Despite his much-touted sense of humor, Bouncing Boy is portrayed as something of a worrier. He has pangs of self-doubt—I suspect soda pop and super-plastic serum aren't the only beverages he imbibes. He's also highly protective of his friends (**Adventure** #380). Cancerians have these qualities. They're also prone to be overweight, since they relate to things through the security of food and family. Most of Chuck's dates with Luornu probably revolved around ice cream shoppes.

Note that Jupiter, which works especially well in Cancer, typifies expansive (inflatable?) energy, and if well-aspected gives a jovial sense of humor. Also the Moon, ruler of Cancer, symbolizes fluctuating influences—like changing moods or on-again-off-again powers—and affects the stomach. If he's a typical Cancer, Chuck married Duo Damsel because she reminds him of Mom, or at least the way Mom cooks. Sentimental, he moons over his old Legion mementos, half loony with regrets and memories. Good thing one of Luornu can soothe ruffled feathers while the other of her putters around in the kitchen.

Wildfire: In many ways, he's a kind of inverted Sun Boy. Where Dirk's body serves to project energy, Drake's acts to contain it. Unexpected bursts of energy are associated with Aquarius. Leo is often conventional, and protects the status quo that keeps him "kingly" and special. Aquarius is *un*conventional, likes to break rules (at least in his youth) and identifies with the masses and the underdog. Astrophysics and space flight are also Aquarian interests.

Unpredicatble, rebellious, tactless: all qualities of a negative Aquarian, and of Mr. Burroughs. The sign rules the lower legs—from which Wildfire often choses to project his energy. The stars are an Aquarian symbol, distant suns that symbolize hope and friendship, but are not as close or as warm as Leonine Sol. Of course, there's a star on Drake's chest—a star with long legs at that (another Aquarian trait!). A little-used aspect of Drake is his ability to "power" machinery, an example of the Aquarian love of gadgets and inventions.

Invisible Kid: Despite his Aquarius-like inventiveness, he was more of a researcher than a creator. Scorpio likes to research and investigate; natural detectives, they seek out the unknown. Often fascinated by death, they may have occult experiences dealing with the afterlife (remember Myla in **Superboy** #203?). Although Lyle probably had some strong earth-sign influences (his taste for brownish tones, his work-out gym in his home), there's not a Scorpio on this planet who wouldn't give his eyeteeth to be invisible.

Ferro Lad: Iron is the metal of Mars, planet of physical strength and energy, which rules two signs—Aries and Scorpio. Aries concerns the face; Scorpio concerns things that are hidden. Andy Nolan's face was so malformed that he hid it behind a solid mask. Scorp is a fixed sign, indicating the native stands firm. Aries, however, has the impulsiveness to rush out and sacrifice himself for his friends. Both signs must have been strong in his makeup.

Colossal Boy: He displays Jupiter expansion again, in height instead of width. Sagittarius is ruled by Jupiter; the Archer is traditionally frank and breezy, liking travel and outdoor work (Gim worked for his uncle on Mars), although accident-prone (Whoops! Watch out for that falling meteor, Gim!). His insistance on walking around as a giant might be an expression of insecurity (this way people will "look up" to him). His old Texas Ranger suit was just the sort of comfortable, outdoorsy outfit a Saj' would prefer; I can't imagine who could have induced him to bind himself up in that Buck Rogers headpiece and those criss-cross chest straps (unless, in accordance with his recent ethnicization, these are futuristic versions of a

A Crash Course in Astrology

Some basic assumptions and terms of astrology need to be explained here, for the benefit of both skeptics and believers; it is an embarrassment that some of its strongest supporters labor under many misconceptions about astrology.

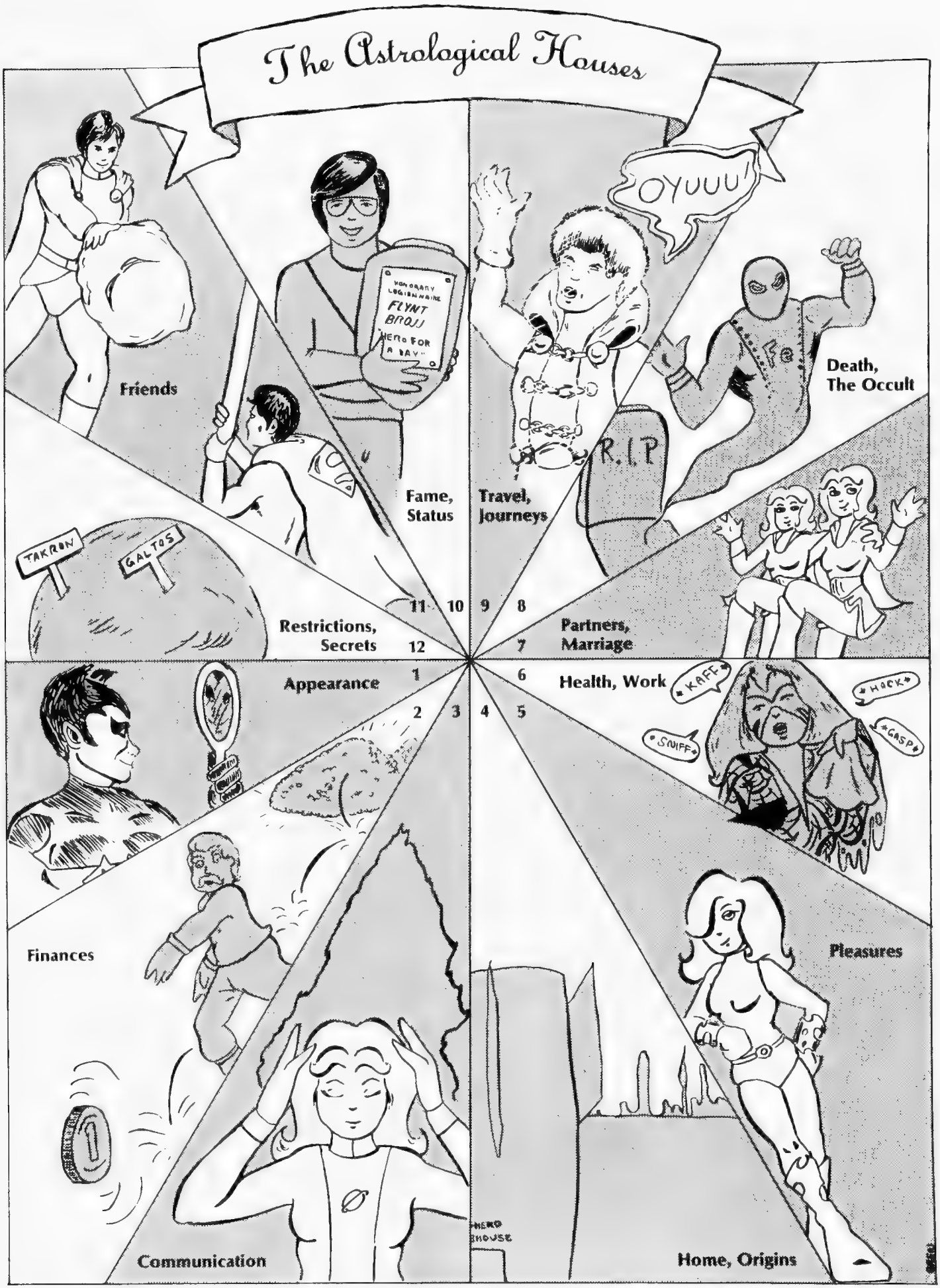
Astrology assumes that every being, from a daisy to a corporation to your Aunt Clara, reflects the qualities of the universe at the time it was born (or sprouted or incorporated). For humans, birth is the moment of separation from the mother; the first breath. Before that moment, the being is not yet an individual.

Despite the prefix astro- **("star"), astrology deals with solar, lunar, and planetary relationships. The stars are so distant, and move so slowly in relation to the Earth, that their effects, if any, are eons-long in application. Over the past two or three millenia, the constellations of the zodiac have shifted in relation to the Earth, due to our planet's wobbly axis. This means that when the Sun begins the astrological year at the vernal equinox, entering the** sign **Aries, it can be found among the** stars **on the border of Aquarius (hence the hit song from** *Hair*). **There are those who consider astrology invalid because the constellations are "wrong" and there have been some efforts by "siderial" astrologers (from Latin** sidus: **a star) to shift the borders of the signs regularly every few years. But the Aries sign is not the half-dozen stars of a constellation assigned to it in ancient Mesopotamia; it's a spacial relationship between Earth and the Sun, the sudden life-burst of spring in the northern hemisphere. The only star involved in astrology is the Sun. (At least, in** our **solar system . . .)**

The Sun, Moon, and planets typify certain types of energy, present in all individuals but utilized differently by each one. Ever-moving, they change mathematical relationships among one another and the Earth, indicating amicable or stressful combinations of energy. As the planets pass through the signs, **(season-related portions of the Sun's apparent journey around the Earth) the energy is modified by qualities of the signs, much as different colors of light would be modified by projecting them through various prisms. Finally, the planets, Sun and Moon fall into pie-slices of the sky around a person's birthplace, called** houses. **(See illustration.) These indicate which facets of life the energies will be turned towards. An example: a person with Saturn (restrictive, disciplining energy) in Gemini (duality, superficialty), in the Seventh House (marriage, partnerships) might be a person whose coolness and inhibitions with others leads to multiple marriages, or simplistic relationships with teachers and father-figures.**

It must be noted that what we are dealing with is natal **astrology, indicating the personality tendencies inherent in the birth moment.** Predictive **astrology would then take the natal chart, superimpose the positions of planets in a future period, and by noting mathematical aspects between the birth planets and future planets, be able to predict trends for the individual during that future period.**

This explanation is a highly **simplified description of how astrology functions. For the curious, I would recomend Alan Okun's text,** *As Above, So Below*, **as an entertaining and well-written introduction to astrology beyond the cocktail-party chatter level.**


The Astrological Houses
Friends
Fame, Status
Travel, Journeys
Death, The Occult
Restrictions, Secrets
Partners, Marriage
Appearance
Health, Work
Finances
Pleasures
Communication
Home, Origins
11
10
9
8
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7
1
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3
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5
OYUUU!
R.I.P
KAFF
HACK
SNIFF
GASP
TAKRON
GALTOS

yarmulke and *tefillin*). At least the suit as it was originally drawn bared his Sagittarian thighs, and the chest-symbol was Zeus's eagle. It might be noted that Gim's parents figure prominently in his Legion career, as hostages (**Adventure** #371-72) when the Legion of Super-Villains forced Gim to instruct their comrades (Saj' is the teacher), and now, with Mrs. Allon as president of Earth. A strong Fourth House influence is in his chart.

Karate Kid: He probably has a powerful Ninth House—his life is so tied up with experiences in foreign places, and long-distance travel through both time and space. He seems forever the stranger, the voyager far from home. His Oriental philosophy helps give him the balance he needs in the midst of such change, and the martial arts of the east are concerned with careful judgement, defense rather than offense, equilibrium rather than force. Mars, at least, and perhaps his Sun, are in Libra. Contemplative states may be mistaken for laziness, and while diplomacy should be his forte, he may appear argumentative simply because he wants to test both sides of a question. Saturn, which works best in Libra, lends him discipline, and he will frequently do something the hard way, or accept ridiculous challenges (such as King Voxv's in the **Karate Kid** solo book) to test himself. His inability to choose which time period he prefers (or, to Projectra's chagrin, which woman) is typically Libran.

Tyroc: To say Tyroc was born on Earth is only a convenience. With Marzal hopscotching from era to era, spending most of the time in a sunless dimension, it's impossible to estimate when Tyroc was born, or what his chart would look like. His power is related to the voice (Taurus-ruled), and he certainly was stubborn enough to be a Bull. Taurus is often body-proud, but his costume seems more likely dictated by Marzal's tropical climate, or Mike Grell's penchant for half-naked heroes. The gold metallic gee-gaws on the costume are typical of a certain flashy Leo taste. It's unfortunate that Tyroc's personality never developed beyond the stereotype stage, and now that he's gone, we'll never know for sure.

Phantom Girl: If the fourth-dimensional planet of Bgztl is always in the exact area as Earth, it stands to reason that its sun must be placed where our Sun is, and that there ought to be fourth-dimensional versions of all the planets circling it. (Not to mention four-dimensional Neptunians who can "flatten" themselves into solid, 3-D people.) If Tinya is truly 4-D, and not just a 3-D being from a 4-D world, when is she going to show us the other parts of her body aside from the humanoid cross-section she allows us to glimpse? Indeed, why can't she slip through time as easily as she does through the other dimensions? (And if you've always been puzzled by extra-dimensional worlds, pick up E. Abbott's fantasy, *Flatland*. I wish a lot of comics writers had copies. But I digress . . .)

Tinya much reminds me of the traditional Southern belle. (Note her *belle*-bottoms?) She's helpless when her man is around, but of left to herself will manage to haul luggage, paint the house, slug super-villains and generally thrive. In short, a Libra woman, cast-iron and frail. Ultra Boy loves her manners and ladylike ways; she is the touch of class he never had himself. There are literally no obstacles for her; she can always get her way. Yet she thinks her power is peculiar; weird and creepy, and definitely *not* ladylike. A woman of etiquette *knocks* before entering a room. She exposes her Libra-ruled navel through bellybutton-like holes in her costume (typically indecisive, she can't decide whether to be clothed or exposed) and emphasizes her Libra tush with tight pants and a low-slung belt. If typical, she'll get hippy when older, and ought to watch her kidneys (if she has any).

Cosmic Boy: Although of Braalian heritage, Rokk was born on Earth. It took me a while to determine his predominant sign; magnetism is a quality associated with Earth and Water signs, the so-called "feminine" half of the zodiac. Venus is the planet of pastels. No one is more solid than Kokk, more dependable, sure enough of himself to wear a pink costume. He's a little square; he came back to Earth to make money—he probably would make an excellent treasurer for the Legion—and could work with his hands. Who else but earthy, practical Taurus? He probably sings, or composes music. And under Grell's brush, sensuous Taurus exposes his Bull-ruled neck and shoulders. (Better watch that Venus sweet-tooth, though, or he'll be unable to fit behind those oversize pasties.)

Those are the Terrans. Only one Legionnaire was born within the confines of our solar system, besides these; she is:

Saturn Girl: This blonde Siren of Titan has all the planets we are accustomed to in her chart, plus the Earth. Yet from Saturn's orbit, none of the inner planets (Mercury, Venus, Earth), which deal with mental and emotional aspects of the self, are ever seen more than a few degrees from the Sun. This situtation, a planet "combust" with the Sun, indicates that these personality aspects are strongly associated with ego, creating a person (or a race of Titanides) who cannot accept criticism and cannot distance their emotional relationships ("love me, love my dog . . ."). Saturn looms enormous in Titan's sky, dominating the subconscious of its people. Saturn is traditionally the planet of restriction, control, discipline and law—and interestingly, the comics have established that there is no crime on Titan! The natives all have their bad thoughts inhibited by the nearby planet of Law and Order. Could Imra be anything but studious, serious, reserved and a bit inhibited? These appear to be racial traits.

Saturn's year is about 29 Earth-years long, so the Sun stays in one sign for almost 2½ years. Compare this to Oriental astrology, where the people of the same birthyear all have the same sign. I suspect Imra's Sun sign is the equivalent of Virgo; she sees herself as prim, efficient, detail-minded; her old costume 's pants were always creased, her high collar secured. But the costume was *red*, and Imra has hidden fires: an impulsive, somewhat selfish inner nature. Some strong influence (Saturn, maybe?) is in Aries. When Garth was killed, her businesslike Virgo mind allowed her to take off on a mission. But Aries impulsiveness came forth when she decided to sacrifice herself to revive Garth. She may be bitchy and domineering, but she is very much the dynamo that keeps the Legion going. Though she's tried to lighten up with her new bikini costume (which suit her like earrings suit a sow!), Virgo does rule the midsection and sides, which are siddenly visible to the public, and like most Virgos, she takes good care of her body, obviously.

All the other Legionnaires come from worlds outside our solar system, and this poses major problems to an astrologer. In a region of different stars, there are different constellations. If the siderialists are correct, are there different signs? More or less than the usual twelve? What planets are there, and how do they function astrologically?

We have learned surprisingly little about the configurations of Legionnaire worlds. Rimbor has three moons, and is on the "outskirts of covilization." Cargg and Zoon both have three suns. Winath orbits near Korbal. The Talok system has at least eight planets.*

I'm working on the assumption that if astrology is valid in other star systems (and Orando does have astrologers), there would be the same interplay of twelve signs based on the planet's orbit around its sun. The problems of multiple suns and moons, strange orbits and unknown planets can only be guessed at. I warn you that these interpretations are iffy and speculative, and if it should turn out that Colu has 42 signs in its zodiac, well, I guess it's back to the intergalactic ephemeris for some more figuring . . .

*** If any reader with a complete Legion collection and the sort of research-oriented mind for this kind of thing has gleaned any further information about our heroes's worlds, I'd appreciate hearing from them. —L.R.**

Several Legionnaires have powers they share racially with all their planet's inhabitants, It would be unfair to use these abilities to typify these heroes' personalities, so we have to dig deeper. For instance:

Cargg has a triple-sun system; apparently all three suns are at the hub of the system, which is not always the case (see Zoon). Astrologically, the sun symbolizes the self, the ego, the personality, the conscious mind. Carggites have three discrete selves, three somatic bodies contained in one. Does each body relate to a different sun? If the suns are spaced far enough apart to occupy parts of the sky ruled by different signs, would some of the bodies have different egos from the others of its trio?

As far as **Duo Damsel** is concerned, one is tempted to shout "Gemini!"—but of course, she is simply one-third dead. Perhaps she is considered a cripple on her world. Does her dead self haunt her? Multiplicity is a Jupiter trait, and Jupiter's number in numerology is three; is Cargg perhaps a Jovian planet? There are four bi-corporal signs in the zodiac. One that is sometimes called a triple sign (and is co-ruled by Jupiter) is Pisces. Luornu is something of a dreamer; she developed a crush on Superboy, knowing him impossible to get, and like many emotionally torn Pisceans, she considered herself unlucky in love. On the positive side, she seems to be more practical than Dream Girl—after all, she did prepare that rabbit for the stranded Legionnaires (**Adventure** #380)—and her basic "I can cope" attitude seems to be a Capricorn influence. She and Chuck are both water signs, emotional and sympathetic. It's interesting that most mythologies see the feminine principle in threes: an innocent virgin, a nurturing mother and a terrifying crone. I wonder which third Luornu lost.

All **Durlans** are shape shifters, a Neptunian ability (the planet rules illusion), and how they do it without a Neptune in their star-system amazes me. **Chameleon Boy** originally wore a plain, dark purple and black costume with bone-like accoutrements. All he needed was a stovepipe hat and buckles on his shoes to look like an interstellar Puritan. He desired respect and prestige for his people. Not fond of parties, shy, and often trying to "pass" as an Earth-human in early stories, he has become one of the Legion's clowns (in lieu of Bouncing Boy), and the new red costume, in keeping with this change, emphasizes his devilish appearance. Neptune in his Tenth House would indicate fame through illusion, possible orphaning at an early age, or a father who is not what he seems. Somber colors, bone, search for status (Reep could've fallen for anyone, but he waited for a rich princess in **Adventure** #376), image as the goat-foot Satan, and most recently a powerful father figure: it all spells Big Daddy Capricorn, despite the recent Leo varnishing.

Naltorians are all precognitive, but **Dream Girl** is their best. Dream prophecies and such are associated with Pisces and the Twelfth House, and Nura embodies many personal qualities of the sign. Platinum is its metal; glamor (and, on the negative side, promiscuity) are associated with the fishes. Her self-fears and insecurities are her undoing, and her earliest change of costume was her shoes (Pisces rules the feet). Her dimples and beauty mark suggest a Venus-type planet or Libra rising, with its attendant laziness and vanity.

Element Lad, last of the **Trommites**, transmutes one element to another. He began his career as Mystery Lad (**Adventure** #305)— and secrecy is a Scorpio obsession. So is vengeance, which he nursed against Roxxas, who ordered the extermination of Jan's people. Pluto, ruler of the Scorpion, is associated with transformation, rebirth and radioactivity. And typical of Scorpio, notice how Jan brings to the fannish mind considerations of his sexuality, whether they be speculations on his sexual propensities, or wonder at what he really did with Imra that lead her to remark that "his power is impressive indeed." The phallic arrow on his new costume is appropriate enough, but the color of Scorpio should be dark red, not green.

Matter-Eater Lad comes from **Bismoll**, where the natives developed an ability to eat anything after their food became poisonous. It's an example of careful Virgoan discrimination and digestion on the part of Bismollians, Tenzil's personality combines the polar opposites of Cancer (stomach and digestion, strong ties to home) with Capricorn (teeth and bones, interest in politics and manipulation of power). Both signs deal with parental influences (he was upset by his father gambling debts in **Action** #381) and it's likely that both the Fourth and Tenth Houses are occupied with planets in opposition, causing some tension in these areas, but leading to eventual fame. Simply stated, he is Joe Kem, All-Bismollian Boy, salt of the Earth; I am confident he will end his "cosmic stupor," caused (in **Superboy and The Legion of Super-Heroes** #351) by eating the Miracle Machine, with an enormous belch and get back to business.

Shrinking Violet has an afflicted Saturn, or its equivalent planet in **Imsk**'s solar system. Shy and gloomy as an afflicted Capricorn in the early issues, with eyebrows steepled into permanant worry lines, she doesn't go out much, seeks comfort in material objects, impulse shops for clothes, and seems to have one date a year with her boyfriend at the other side of the galaxy. She has lots of fears—about monsters, for instance—which is only natural to a girl who can become prey to aphids and paramecium, and whose people are attacked by bigoted human monsters as well (**Superboy and the Legion of Super-Heroes** #232). Her prim, light green miniskirt with the shoulder bib and the dog collar emphasized Taurean parts of the anatomy. Her new costume, with its dark green hip-boots and tendril-like midsection decoration, is more like a laid-back Virgo's farm suit. And as Jupiter rules expansion, Saturn rules shrinking. She's been losing her temper more under Conway's scripting, which is the best way to rid yourself of depression, I guess. Whatever her sign, it's an earth sign for sure. She likes rock formations, doesn't she?

Brainiac 5 is a repressed Aquarius, like many inventors. He's tops in the intellect departemnt, but has trouble handling his emotions. He saves most of his passion for his formulae and the driving desire to undo the evil of his ancestor. Now that he has destroyed Brainiac/Stargrave, he may find his sex drive rearing its ugly little head again. A few cups of Kono juice and I'll bet he gets rowdy. A fixed air sign, he's impossible to influence unless you impress him with your logic; otherwise, he's very stubborn and old-fashioned in many ways, although basically progressive. Even his force-field belt is an example of "fixed air"—immovable, yet gas-permeable. Identify with the underdog? He's hanging around with us sixth-level retards, isn't he? An electric blue or silver jumpsuit would be more in keeping with his Aquarian image, but Waterbearers don't usually bother with their clothes anyway, preferring to spend money on gimmicks and thingamjigs. His recent insanity indicates a hidden dark side, a Scorpio vengeance or Mercury/mind aspect (Mercury rules the Fifth House) triggered by a Pluto/obsessional transit. Which brings up an interesting question: When an extrastellar being is on Earth, how do our transiting planets affect the alien planets of his natal chart?

Princess Projectra could probably answer that question, being an hereditary mystic, medium and astrologer. Neptune is associated with illusion, mediumship and things that go bump in the night, so there's probably a Neptune like-planet near **Orando** that's strong in her chart. She also has a Uranian influence, having broken old traditions and left her home planet; the curse of her leaving may be her dubious distinction as "most likely to have a nervous breakdown or otherwise go crazy in times of stress" (**Action** #392). These high-strung purebreds, y'know. Neptune is strongest in Leo, which signifies royalty, and she is no doubt a Lioness, with a love of pride, pomp, and ceremony—but kept under Daddy's thumb, she's as misty and vague as a night on the moors.

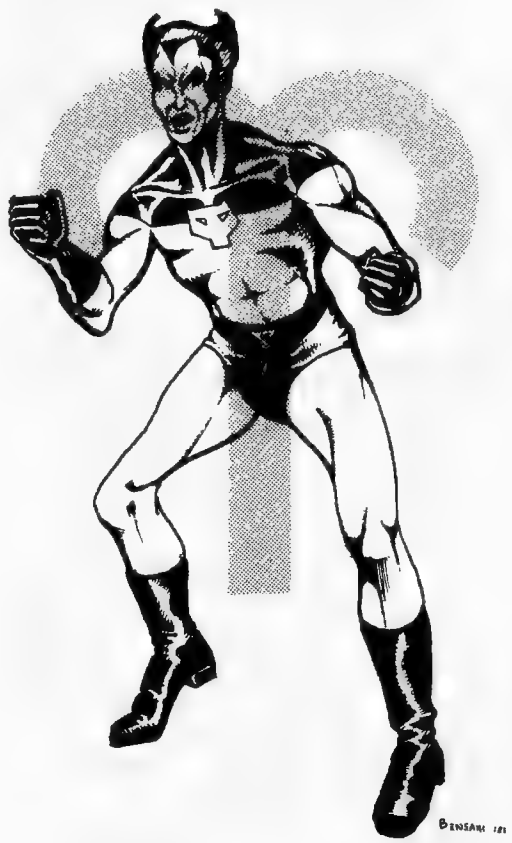
Timber Wolf: Have pity on poor Brin; he was afraid he was an android, not fit for human company. When he discovered he was human, he went out and had himself made up to look non-human. No wonder he's so confused.**Zoon** has a triple sun, three personality influences, but unlike the Carrgites, natives of Zoon have none of the security of three separate bodies to place them in. Two suns are apparently nearby and together; a third, green sun comes out at night, indicating it's probably a lesser companion orbiting the other two suns from outside Zoon's orbit. It may be so far off that it doesn't even lend much light and heat, but it seems to have locked Zoon into synchronous orbit. Zoonian roosters crow at sunrise and sunset, because something is always lighting the sky, and the poor Zoonians can't get any sleep, which would make *anyone* want to take on an animal appearance.

Aries rules the face, and since Ferro Lad's death there's hardly an odder one in the Legion the Brin's (although no one's drawn his hair correctly since Dave Cockrum left). When the Ram can't lead, he turns his considerable energies inward to sulking and selfishness. Mars-enegry makes them great at making new starts, and exhibiting childlike enthusiasm; but they also seldom finish things, and can be childishly impatient. A nasty temper, but a quick one, and not one to hold a grudge. It has been shown that Brin has an addictive personality; once, he was hooked on Lotus-fruit (**Action** #378). He seems the most likely Legionnaire to use hard drugs, and to be one of the most self-destructive. Ayla's undying devotion is what he needs, and I think he would "test" friends, by ignoring them or being cruel, to see if they'd stay with him.

Chemical King: This character is a puzzle to me. An elusive personality, rather superficial. Jim Shooter believed Condo was very rich, spoiled rotten, and making a game of being a Legionnaire until surprised by World War VII. He used to show off his expensive new sky-car. He spent almost no time with Element Lad despite the similarity of their powers. He might have been a Gemini, a sign that sometimes seems superficial, that likes cars and games. Maybe he played practical jokes, wrote short stories, and was a secret juggler or a pickpocket. But mostly, he's dead. He played an Eighth House fugue and was gone.

Dawnstar: She's an incarnation of Astraea, the Greek star goddess who *is* the constellation Virgo, in American Indian dress. Complete control of body functions, with good business sense and an analytical mind that cuts through illusions, she joined the Legion for money. Virgo, Virgo, Virgo. Boring. At least real Virgos show a sense of humor. A dawnstar is a planet, usually Mercury or Venus, that rises before the sun, seeming to guide it on its course, much as Dawny guides her clients, or the Legionnaires. It's a good name. Greeks called such a planet Lucifer, the light-bringer. Christians noted that Lucifer rises proundly before the Sun, but falls and sets while the Sun is still shining, and associated the name with the proud angel who falls before God. I wish this proud angel of the Legion would show a little of the devil in her. Interestingly, some astrologers associate Virgo with the asteroid belt, a typical environment for Dawny to thread her way through.

Mon-El is more mature, yet less self-assured, than Superboy. They both came from similar civilizations; Aquarian-futuristic, huge, Jovianly expansive planets. Yet Superboy is obviously a classical sun-hero; Mon-El is his dark side, the hero who must suffer to find redemption. It's obvious that he has afflictions to planets in the Sixth House of health, and Twelfth House of secrets, sorrows, and restrictions. He symbolically died by entering the Phantom Zone, in pain and taunted by his fellow exiles; was able to watch the foibles of mankind for a millenium, unable to warn or teach them—an experience that would make anyone tolerant, if cynical. After a couple of false starts, he was reborn in the Thirtieth Century, with a physical dependence on a rare serum. It is often forgotten that Mon-El is obsessed with the life-sciences. He will aid another before performing his duties. With Capricorn forethought he planned to revive Lightning Lad with his own life before Saturn Girl



impetuously planned to take his place. Fond of physical objects and sensuality, his phobia is probably a desire never to be insubstantial again. (Does Phantom Girl make him uneasy?) Lead (ruled by Saturn) almost killed him; his lesson was to overcome lead/Saturn (i.e.: inhibition, coldness) and turn it to order and discipline. His girlfriend is fated to die. His whole life is a hard-luck case, and yet he survives. Mon-El is a very highly evolved Capricorn, with a great deal of Pisces Christ-imagery thrown in. As Superboy would agree, the Goat is, in more than one sense, the "Big Brother."

Shadow Lass is gifted with the dark mystery of Scorpio and Pluto—see the batwings on her boots, the serpenty bracelets? She is gutsy, takes initiative, can be passionately jealous; yet she hides her depths under a Gemini exterior, seeming chatty, flirty and flighty. With this combination, she could work well as a double agent or spy, talking a great deal, but giving out no secrets while pumping the enemy for his. Her self-image needs improving; if she is pink-skinned when she dies (as the cover of **Adventure** #354 suggests), it may be because she had her complexion changed in hopes of pleasing Mon by becoming more like him—not unlike the misled Japanese women who had their eyes altered in the hope of keeping American lovers. She feels everything too deeply, is quick to take offense and is an implacable enemy.

Star Boy was born on **Xanthu**, apparently a colony world of Earth's future. Or rather, he was born *around* Xanthu, in a space observatory. Quite a problem for an astrologer. I don't think he would have any houses in his birthchart, there being no horizon or midheaven from which to derive them. Astronomy, like astrology, is ruled by Aquarius, and there are all those Aquarian stars on his costume. But look at Thom's career: Secret powers gained in deep space, the ability to induce mass into objects; away for some time on secret missions; expelled for accidental murder. These, plus Shooter's assertion that Thom is endowed like a Jovian camelephant, lead me to suspect his primary influence is Scorpio.

Ultra Boy: An awful lot of fans are fond of this character, and it isn't only because of his nifty costume. There is a shady, underworld side to Jo; he's streetwise and cynical, the first of the Legionnaires who didn't shave behind his ears. His love of space speedsters corresponds to a Twentieth Century Gemini preoccupation with fast cars, with some Aries death-defying thrown in. The Legion grease-monkey, he's good with machines, vehicles, robots; he prefers to work with his hands. He likes tricks and undercover work—he was expelled from the Legion as a hoax, but I'll bet he has a juvenile offense record. Rimbor has three purple moons, giving its inhabitants three sets of instincts, habits, subconscious minds. A planet of cosmic schizophrenia. Just compare Jo's tough-guy attitude with the way he treats Tinya. Like Mon-El, there's a Twelfth House affliction here, involving imprisonment (in an energy beast's tummy), and a secret fear. There was a fair exchange with the energy beast that almost devoured him; he took the powers given by the beast's life energy, but he left a piece of his soul in deep space, frightened and alone. Despite all his Legion fame, deep down Jo is still a street punk, not far from the days of petty theft and glib Gemini excuses.

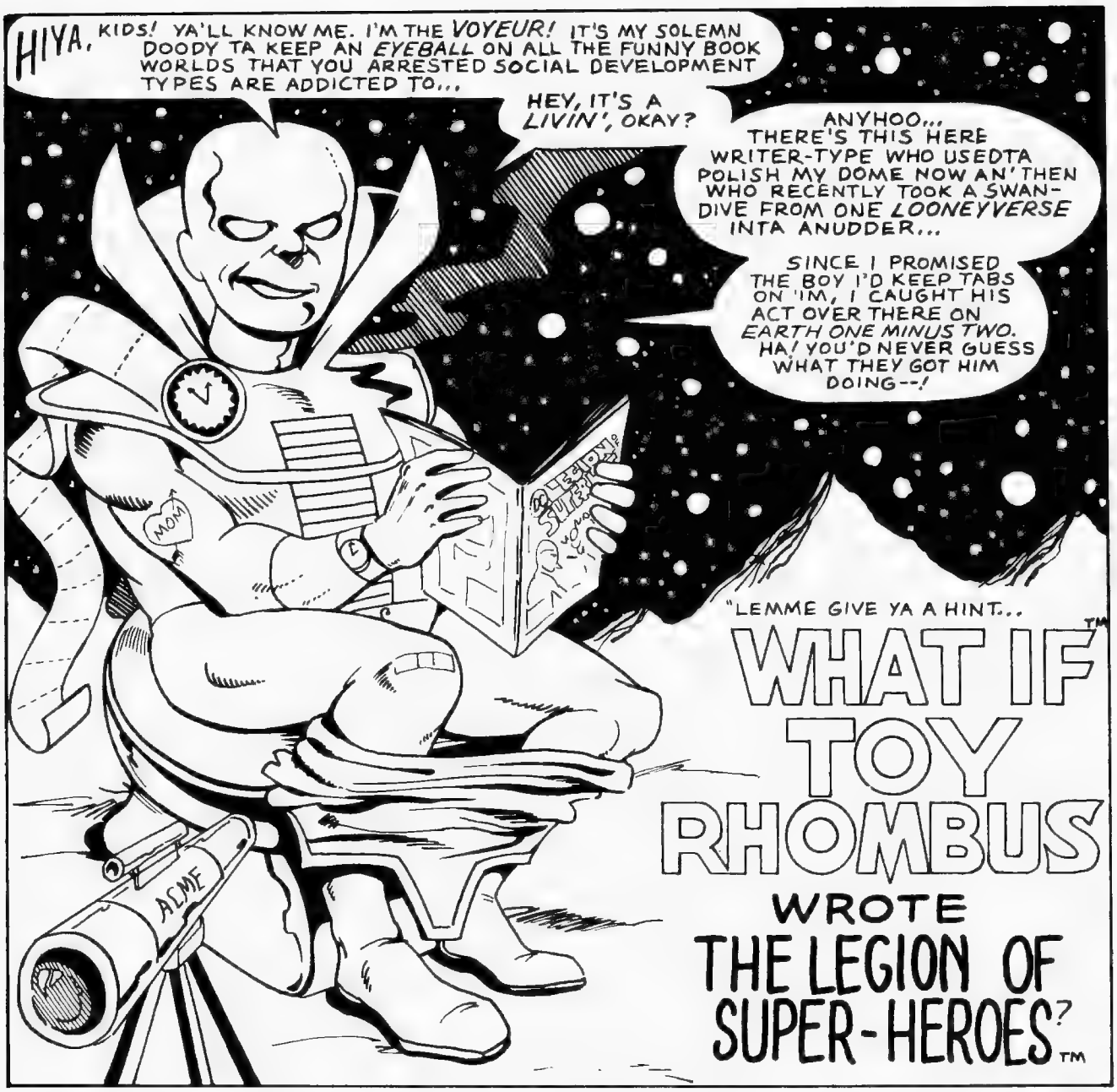
Lightning Lad and **Light Lass:** Born within a few hours of each other, twins usually have similar horoscopes. Only the fastest moving planets, influencing mental abilities, and the ascendant, ruling the social persona, are likely to have changed. Born to be human thunderbolt-hurlers, I assume their sun signs are Sagittarius, ruled on Earth by Jupiter the wielder of lightning (and in **Winath**'s system, ruled by planet Korbal). Archers love to travel, and Saj' women are frequently boyishly athletic-looking. Garth has an obvious strong Leo influence in his chart—the romantic hero and lover, impatient to make a swashbuckling entrance. Note how his old costume drew attention to his Saj'-ruled thighs by painting them orange; how his new costume does the same thing by coloring them white. How could Imra ever pass up those legs? The semi-formal effect of the new costume plays toward Leo's love of "dressing up" for an occasion; all he needs is a short opera cape to empahsize his Leonine back. Saj' is notoriously accident-prone, and Garth has gone through death and coming back from the dead, only to lose an arm.

Ayla's secondary influence is Libran. Her emphasis on teamwork and partnership, the feather emblem (symbolizing Saturnine truth and justice to the Egyptians), her androgeny, the artfully designed new costume, even the ridiculous old uniform with the clinched waist and cup of cloth around her Libra buns—all point to the Balance. Ayla cries a lot—over her brother's death, over Brin's problems—but she picks herself up and carries on in the Libra tradition. Her gentle strength is a complement to Timber Wolf's brash moodiness.

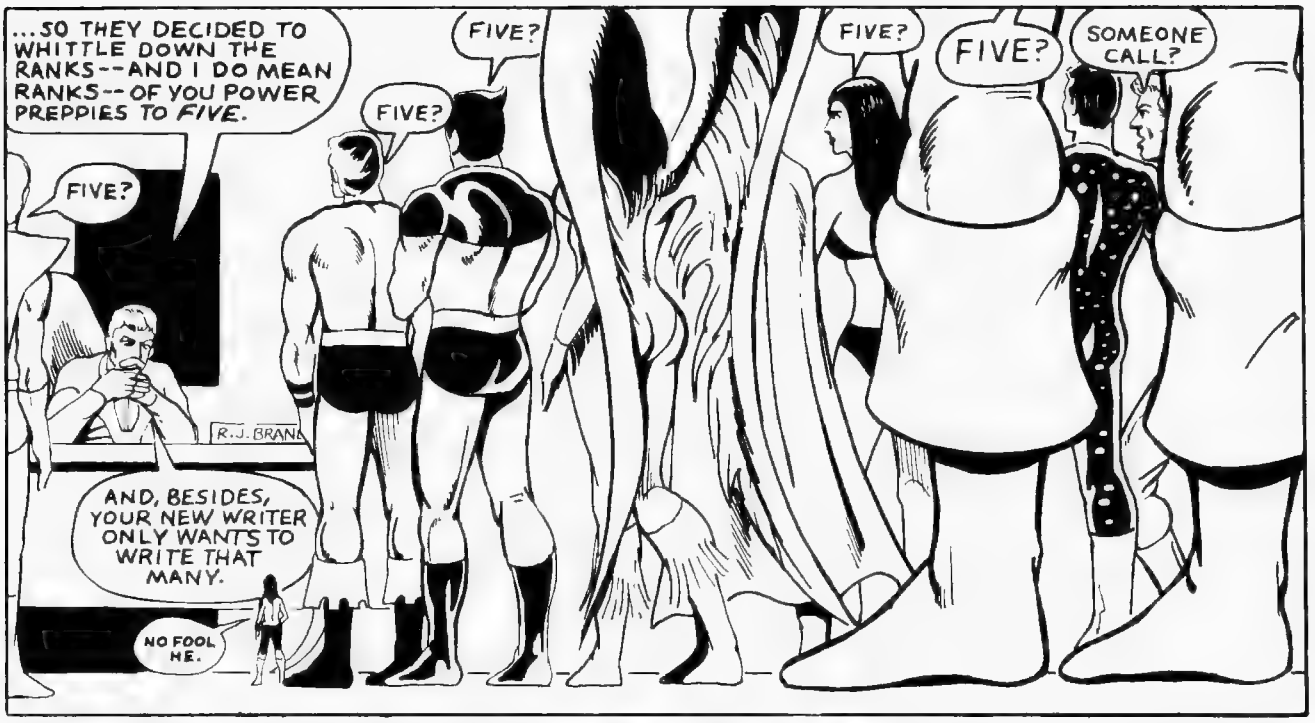
What is Night Girl's persona like, with no sun/ego to relate to in her chart? Stone Boy's people must be limited to births under half the zodiac—they are immobile (and, one assumes, non-childbearing) for half the year. The extrapolations can go on forever, but this article can't. If there are any fans out there who have their own astrological observations about the Legion, I'd like to hear them; you can contact me through the **Legion Outpost** editors. I hope you've been as surprised and entertained by the correspondences as I have.

Special thanks go to E. Nelson Bridwell, whose calendar instigated this article; to Jim Shooter, for sitting in a hotel room four years ago and engaging a group of fans with his reflections on Legion personalities; to Harry Broertjes, for encouraging me to put this mind-numbing exercise on paper; and especially to Janet Holwell—astrologer, teacher, friend—who took a curious fumbler and made a planet juggler out of him.

Script and Art by Michael Ellis


HIYA, KIDS! YA'LL KNOW ME. I'M THE VOYEUR! IT'S MY SOLEMN DOODY TA KEEP AN EYEBALL ON ALL THE FUNNY BOOK WORLDS THAT YOU ARRESTED SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT TYPES ARE ADDICTED TO...
HEY, IT'S A LIVIN', OKAY?
ANYHOO... THERE'S THIS HERE WRITER-TYPE WHO USEDTA POLISH MY DOME NOW AN' THEN WHO RECENTLY TOOK A SWAN-DIVE FROM ONE LOONEYVERSE INTA ANUDDER...
SINCE I PROMISED THE BOY I'D KEEP TABS ON 'IM, I CAUGHT HIS ACT OVER THERE ON EARTH ONE MINUS TWO. HA! YOU'D NEVER GUESS WHAT THEY GOT HIM DOING--!
MOM
ACME
"LEMME GIVE YA A HINT..
WHAT IF™ TOY RHOMBUS WROTE THE LEGION OF SUPER-HEROES?™

THIS IS HOW IT BEGINS... IN THE OFFICE OF ONE R.J. BRANDECCH, THE LEGION OF SUPER-HEROES' FILTHY RICH BENEFACTOR, BUSYBODY, AND ALL-AROUND NOODGE...
...BEGINS... ...OFFICE OF ONE ...ECCH, THE LEGION ALL-AROUND NOODGE...
...GIONNAIRES, LET ME GIVE THIS TO YOU STRAIGHT: THE UNITED PLANETS HAS DECIDED THAT WITH TWENTY-FIVE OF YOU, YOUR COSTUMES ARE JUST TOO BAME HARD TO KEEP TRACK OF...
OY!
STORY AND ART WITH DIA...
1


...SO THEY DECIDED TO WHITTLE DOWN THE RANKS--AND I DO MEAN RANKS--OF YOU POWER PREPPIES TO *FIVE*.
FIVE?
FIVE?
FIVE?
FIVE?
FIVE?
SOMEONE CALL?
R.J. BRAN
AND, BESIDES, YOUR NEW WRITER ONLY WANTS TO WRITE THAT MANY.
NO FOOL HE.

B-BUT WHAT ABOUT THE *REST* OF US, SIR?
I'VE GOT NEW ASSIGNMENTS FOR ALL OF YOU... ALL DESIGNED TO TAKE MOST ADVANTAGE OF YOUR STUP... I MEAN, *UNIQUE* POWERS.
R.J. BRA

SOME OF YOU WILL JOIN THE *FOREVER PEOPLE* ON THE PLANET KANSULD.
SOME WILL JOIN *RIPOFF HUNTER, TIME CONSUMER*.
COSMIC BOY, YOU'RE BEING TRANSFERRED TO THE *NUDESBOY LEGION*.
WHAT THE GRELL?
SOME OF YOU WI
THE *SEWERSIDE S*
YOU CAN PICK UP
RAZOR BLADES
YOUR WAY OUT
THIS PART GETS A LITTLE *BORING*-- LET'S SKIP AHEAD TO THE *GOOD STUFF*.
2

" THE TIME IS 1942, AND THREE 30TH CENTURY YOUTHS HAVE BEEN CHOSEN TO AID RECENT GRADUATE OF THE LEGION OF SUPER-PETTERS, SUPERROY AS FOUNDING MEMBERS OF THE LEGION OF LIBERTY HEROES..
GEEZ, BRAINY, DO YOU BELIEVE R.J. WOULD SEND ME, HIS OWN SON, TO THIS BACKWARD TIME ERA?
CHAM, I DON'T EVEN BELIEVE THAT YOU ARE HIS OWN SON!
OH, SUPERROY-- WHO ARE THOSE OTHER HEROES?
OH, HI, DREAMY-- SAY DO YOU MIND IF I CALL YOU DREAMETTE?
IT'LL MAKE ME FEEL MORE SECURE.
AS FOR THESE GUYS, IT'S ONLY FAIR THAT WE INTRODUCE SOME NATIVE LEGIONNAIRES FROM THIS TIME AND SO FORTH!

ANYWAY, I'D LIKE YOU TO MEET AQUAMARINER, HAWKBOY, AND WILD CHILD. THEY'RE GOING TO HELP US FIGHT OUR DEADLIEST ENEMAS--

THE FUTILE FIVE!
SHOOTIUS!
GERRYMANDER!
THE BATE-MASTER!
EMPEROR OTTOMAN!
LEVI-LAD!
WELL, YOU GET THE PICTURE! IT'S NOT GREAT, BUT IT'S GOOD FOR 3 MINUTES ON THE CRAPPER!
30

"SHREW?"

By JUDY ROSENBAUM

NOTE: If you think you've heard this one before, please keep reading. This isn't Shakespeare and it isn't Star Trek, either.

•

"Are there really people who dress like that every day?" said Brin. He sprawled across a chair, reading a book to the hum of the shuttlecraft's engines.

Dirk looked affronted. He had felt rather regal, wrapped as he was in fur-edged brocade. "Some cultures have a lot more taste than others," he said, his voice hinting at the depths to which Philistines could sink on planets like Zoon.

"Better you than me," said Brin, rolling up the sleeves of his comfortably shabby work tunic.

Dirk returned his attention to the mirror. "You're probably right."

Wolf grunted and went back to his book as Imra and Brainiac 5 walked in. Imra whistled appreciatively at Dirk.

"Don't get him started again," said Wolf, turning a page.

But Brainiac was all business. "You land in 15 minutes," he said.

"I'm set," said Dirk. He turned from the mirror with a swing of his deep amber cloak. He really did look impressive, as if he were used to wearing such rich, archaic dress. He would impress the court of Belisarius, King of Dari, when he came to transport the king's daughter to her wedding on the other side of the planet. Brainy had had a lot to do with the marriage arrangement, after King Lund of Neira had claimed Turenn's hand (and thereby right of succession for his descendants on Belisarius' throne). The marriage would strengthen a heretofore shaky relationship between two kingdoms whose wars had bid fair to explode the planet. For despite its monarchic system, Vorth's peoples had nuclear weaponry. With its rich fields and forests, Vorth was far more valuable to the United Planets at peace than it was at war.

"Now remember," Brainiac said anxiously. "Turenn is reputed to be a bit strongminded. Try to keep her in line without offending her."

"Lucky you," said Brin, as visions of playing Petruchio to some lush offworld Kate surfaced briefly in Dirk's mind. Dirk grinned and gave Brainiac a snappy salute. But as he sauntered off the shuttle, Imra said, "Nothing above and beyond the call, Morgna."

Dirk didn't make any promises.

•

The court of Belisarius was overwhelming, a massive, gracious building two thousand years old or more. How the natives of Vorth had mastered atomic warfare without leaving behind all this tradition was impossible to fathom. But here it was, crowns and megatons in one culture. Dirk looked around the hall at the gathered nobility of Dari. Belisarius himself stood at kingly ease by Dirk's side. "Ah, Lord Morgna," he said. "I am glad the United Planets stands behind this joyous alliance. If you must know—" and here his voice sank to a conspiratorial whisper, "—that daughter of mine needs a strong husband like Lund. I hope you're the same sort of man. She can be a bit difficult, and you've a long trip ahead of you."

"I won't disappoint you, your majesty," said Dirk. If Turenn took after either of her parents, she would make an extremely pleasant-looking traveling companion.

A fanfare of horns sounded. Across the long upper gallery came a pair of ladies-in-waiting. Their knee-length tunics and gathered trousers, graceful and beautiful, gave them a freedom of movement their ancestresses had not known. Dirk's pulse quickened. If these were the waiting-women, the princess must be . . . Almost unconsciously, he flicked his cloak so it would fall around him better.

Turenn of Dari appeared.

Dirk's mouth dried. He eyed the skinny, gaunt-faced creature as she walked down the marble stair. This was the woman whom Lund had demanded as the price of peace? Brainiac must have negotiated one hell of a deal to make this woman worth asking for. Dirk took a deep breath and schooled his face to show admiration. He bowed deeply as she approached, and when he straightened, he saw that she was as tall as he was, her forbidding face defiantly on a level with his.

•

The airship took off that afternoon, with Dirk in a foul mood. For him to spend time with either of the two waiting-women would have been a deep offense to the princess, so he was stuck with her. And she sat stonily quiet, staring out the airship's narrow window. Was he expected somehow to leaven her attitude before they landed? Somehow, facing the bite of her temper did not seem worth it.

However, he had to give it a try, for Brainiac's sake, if not for the two kings'. "I hope that's not the way you plan to greet King Lund," he said.

"I might," said Turenn. No pouting, no foot-stamping. Nothing to work with. Damn it, she was strong in all the wrong ways. Dirk sighed and looked around for the two waiting-women. One of them smiled fetchingly at him. The other giggled behind her hand. Even from here, he could smell the perfume that they had sprinkled in their hair. Ah, the beautiful women of Vorth.

"The one on the left is Aryl; the other one is Dilaea,"

said Turenn. "Doubtless, they would be enchanted to hear of your adventures."

Well, that was an edict he could live with. He appraoched, smiling, the exquisite Aryl and Dilaea. There was no privacy in the airship's single passenger chamber, but a discreet two-way flirtation was certainly possible.

The airship lurched. There was a small popping sound, as if something pressurized had exploded—or fallen off. Dirk froze for a second, then sprinted for the robo-pilot's cabin. He heard screams behind him, and one set of purposeful running footsteps. He looked back to see Turenn right behind him.

"Stay back—*that's an order*, lady!" he snapped. Then he ran through the cabin's hatch. It hissed shut behind him.

The instrument panel was flashing like a light show. The robo-pilot was just about registering overload. Dirk punched the manual lever and tried to wrestle the airship into a safe crash landing.

He got the crash part right.

•

Dirk came to, feeling as if he were trapped under a giant's foot. As he opened his eyes, he saw why: The airship was on top of him. He stretched experimentally. His arms were free, thank goodness. He pushed at the metal hulk above him, but nothing moved.

A shadow slid across his face. "Are you in pain?" said Turenn.

"Not really," said Dirk. His voice sounded strangely rusty. "How are the others?"

Turenn knelt by him. "Aryl is unconscious. I think she has a concussion. Dilaea is all right. I have her watching Aryl."

"Help me push this thing off me," said Dirk.

"You're joking," said Turenn, but she leaned against the ship and shoved when he gave the signal. The airship shifted the merest bit and then fell back into place, knocking the breath from his lungs.

"Oh, hell," said Dirk when he could speak again.

"I don't suppose a third pair of hands would make much of a difference," said Turenn.

Not unless they were Lar Gand's. "No," said Dirk.

"Don't you have some sort of power?" asked Turenn.

"None that's any use here," said Dirk wearily. "I'd ignite the airship's fuel before I could heat up enough to melt my way free."

Turenn got to her feet. "And the radio's broken. Well, there's nothing to do but go for help."

"Go for—*alone*?" Dirk tried to change position so he could see her. Finally he got her in view, somewhat. "You're not going anywhere. It's too dangerous."

"Giving orders again?" said Turenn. "Very well, I most certainly will not go alone. I'll take my army. Or perhaps you would care to accompany me?"

Dirk fumed.

"And please don't suggest I take Dilaea with me. Someone who can move around has to stay with you and Aryl," said Turenn.

"You don't even know where you're going!"

"Yes I do, more or less. There's a village about six leagues south of here. Mahiri. I visited it once. The people there will help."

"Weren't we over forest when we crashed? There'll be wild animals out there!"

"What other choice do we have? Our water will run out, and we can't fix the radio."

Dirk closed his eyes, wishing for Imra's power, or Lar's. Or Brin's. Damn, why hadn't they ignored Brin's protests about wearing these clothes and just bundled him into them and *sent* him? All Dirk seemed able to do was look good, and make like a sun.

And fly.

Dirk shifted his head. "Princess," he said softly.

"What is it?" she said. He could already hear her rummaging around for things to take on her journey.

"Do you think you could learn how to handle a flight ring?"

•

Despite the fact that Dirk couldn't see Turenn, much less demonstrate the ring himself, it didn't take long to teach her how to fly with it. After all, the anti-gravity element that powered the ring was controlled by willpower, and Turenn had plenty of that. At last, she decided she was ready. As she soared away, Dirk heard branches crackle overhead as she broke through to the open sky. Now there was nothing more he could do.

Dilaea came and sat by Dirk; she stroked his hair, which felt nice. But she was not the sort of woman one could talk to, and he seemed to need that just now. The ideal situation with Dilaea would have had to contain a large amount of physical proximity. Dilaea might be the perfect girl to be stranded with, but not when one was pinned under the hull of an EX-F30. Dirk found himself wishing for the acerbic sound of Turenn's voice.

It grew dark. Dirk's body cramped up, and Dilaea began to panic. Poor girl, she really had no training for this sort of thing. Aryl awoke around nightfall, and she was not much calmer than Dilaea. But everyone managed to sleep in alternating shifts.

At daybreak, the villagers rode in on their horselike vortins, with Turenn at their head. They tied ropes to the vortins and the airship, and pulled Dirk from under it. Lord, but it was wonderful just to be able to stand up again! He tried to thank the villagers. They spoke a sort of patois, but Turenn translated for him and he made himself understood.

While the villagers attended to Aryl and Dilaea, Dirk got his legs working again by taking a little walk. After a while, he heard footsteps behind him, brisk, decisive. He knew them almost as well as his own by now.

"Here's your ring back," said Turenn.

He took it. "You made good time," he said.

Turenn said, "There was a north wind. Do you know how to ride, by the way?"

Dirk looked toward the vortins. "No, but I learn fast." *Almost as fast as you do, bonny Kate.* He thought of the way he had tried to order her around and almost laughed aloud.

They started back to the ruined ship. Dirk walked slowly, suddenly reluctant to continue the journey to Neira. Turenn was not an object to be sold, a treasure to be handed from king to king. He stopped walking. "Maybe there's another way," he said.

Turenn stopped too. "Another way to what? You mean, for me?"

"Yes, for you." Helplessness made him irritabte. "You deserve better than this. Surely there are other ways to stop war."

"Don't get histrionic," Turenn said calmly. "I've met Lund. He's a bit sure of himself, but that seems to be a prevailing fault in kings. He's not stupid, though, and he's reckoned to be a fair ruler. We'll get on. Besides, I'll have plenty to keep me busy. There are still a lot of refugees from the last war. Someone has to see to them."

She smiled at Dirk, and suddenly the perfumed Dilaea seemed vapid and incomplete. Dirk took Turenn's hand and bowed over it. "Long live the queen," he said.

•

It took another two days to reach Neira. Dirk handed Turenn over to her betrothed, Lund of Neira, a lean man with quick, intelligent eyes. He was Dirk's height—and Turenn's. Dirk thought of saying something to the king, but decided to leave it alone. Turenn, after all, could take care of herself.

When the Legion cruiser returned to pick up Dirk, the first person he met was Brin. "Well," said the Wolf. "Did you shape her up?"

"No, thank heaven," said Dirk.

He kept to his quarters for a while after that. He had a lot to think about.

The Legion: 1966

Part Four of a Series

By HARRY BROERTJES

There's no small dose of irony in Roy Thomas's takeover as the Legion of Super-Heroes' regular writer this year—irony not only for its own sake, considering his rather . . . er, emphatic feelings about Jim Shooter, but irony also for the opportunity it will give us to size up the respective contributions to the series made by two very talented writers, more than a decade apart.

We can only guess how Thomas might build upon and embellish the Legion's legacy, both in style and in substance. But in the meantime, we can look back at another set of changes brought about by Shooter during the early months of his career in comics, a career that in its own way turned out to be as distinguished and influential—and, some would say, as notorious—as that of his newest successor on the Legion.

It would be mighty convenient to say Shooter's first stint on the Legion began with bang, but the fact is that his first few stories weren't exactly world-burners. They slid so easily into the transition the series was undergoing in 1966 that it would take a careful reading of the year's stories (or a peek at the lettercol of **Adventure** #349) to pinpoint the start of the Shooter-era Legion.

By the time Shooter debuted in **Adventure** #346, the July 1966 issue, the artistic transition had already been completed, with Curt Swan replacing John Forte as the series' regular artist in **Adventure** #340. And the first distinctively Shooter story—the first Fatal Five two-parter—wasn't to appear until **Adventure** #352. During the year between those two issues, four writers handled the Legion—Jerry Siegel, Edmond Hamilton, E. Nelson Bridwell, and Shooter—and the approaches their stories took at the time were strikingly similar.

During that transitional period, three trends were evident:

—Less of a point was made of offering up space opera and adventures on strange planets. For the most part, the futuristic setting was taken for granted—and not always used to its best advantage.

—The Legionnaires were treated more as individuals, with the stories tending increasingly to focus on them singly where previously they had, more often than not, just been a part of the crowd, set apart only by their costumes and powers. (There were obvious exceptions to the earlier approach, of course, including Superboy, who axiomatically was a special case, and Saturn Girl, who was treated as the no-nonsense boss-type who Phantom Girl would reveal, in **Legion of Super-Heroes** #274, had been called the "ice maiden" behind her back—at least, insofar as anyone could say anything behind her back.)

—The tone of the stories became looser, less detached, and the dialogue became more natural. Here, it's possible that this was largely the doing of Bridwell, who had recently signed on as Mort Weisinger's assistant Editor and who might have been responsible for punching up the no-frills narration and perfunctory patter that had characterized the earlier stories by Hamilton, who had been the series' principal writer.

And what of Shooter's contribution to the series' new direction? Well, he probably was the right person who happened to come along at the right time. He was not especially oriented toward science fiction—which was no great liability at the time—but he was reasonably adept at maintaining its trappings; he was a good writer, an outstanding one considering his age, who seemed to know naturally how to plot, pace and execute his stories in a professional, accessible manner; and he brought a youthful perspective to a series that, after all, was for and about people roughly his own age.

Had Hamilton been inclined to remain in comics, it's possible that Shooter wouldn't have gotten his big break and that the future of the comics industry would have been radically altered. But then, speculating about that sort of thing is kind of like wondering what would have happened had your mother said on the night you were conceived, "Not tonight, dear, I have a headache."

Well, Mrs. Shooter, at any rate, didn't have a headache, and so it is that we've come to talk about the Shooter-era Legion, with or without any fireworks that might have accompanied its premiere.

Looking back at the era's beginnings, I can recall the way Shooter's early stories stirred my pre-teenage sense of wonder. I could easily recommend those stories today to certain comics writers, who would learn a thing or two about straightforward, imaginative storytelling if they were to read them.

But with 15 years' worth of hindsight, I can also say something now that I would have damned as heretical back in 1973, when I wrote the previous installment of this column, covering the final pre-Shooter stories of 1966. It's this: On the whole, there was nothing particularly great about Shooter's first few Legion tales. They weren't bad stories but—with one exception, #349's "The Rogue Legionnaire"—they weren't anything to write home about, either. Beyond that, I suspect that if Shooter's first three issues had somehow been kept in cold storage for 15 years and were published today for the first time, everybody would find plenty to criticize in them—things that never would have concerned us in '66.

But then, exactly the same thing could be said about the early issues of almost every comic on the stands that was to become a pacesetter, from Stan Lee's Fantastic Four and Spider-Man, to the incarnations of the Teen Titans that spawned the current fave rave, to the grandaddy of them all; the Siegel and Shuster Superman.

All of which is another way of saying, Lookit, comics change just as readers' outlooks change; perceptions and standards evolve and expectations find their goals down different paths than they once did, both in the halls of DC and Marvel and among the readers who shell out their change for a four-color fix. The fact that the seminal stories, if they were to be reprised today without the benefit of appreciative hindsight, may not strike us as favorably as they once did doesn't take away from the thrills we once enjoyed, nor does it diminish the stories' crucial importance over the long haul.

And through it all, it's helpful to take some time now and then to check out the roots from which it all grew. Who knows—we might just find some long-forgotten element of those stories that could be put to good use today.

So let's go back to the second half of 1966 in **Adventure Comics**. It was ushered in by a Shooter two-parter and closed out by a Bridwell two-parter, with two single-issue stories by Shooter in between. Ready?

• • •

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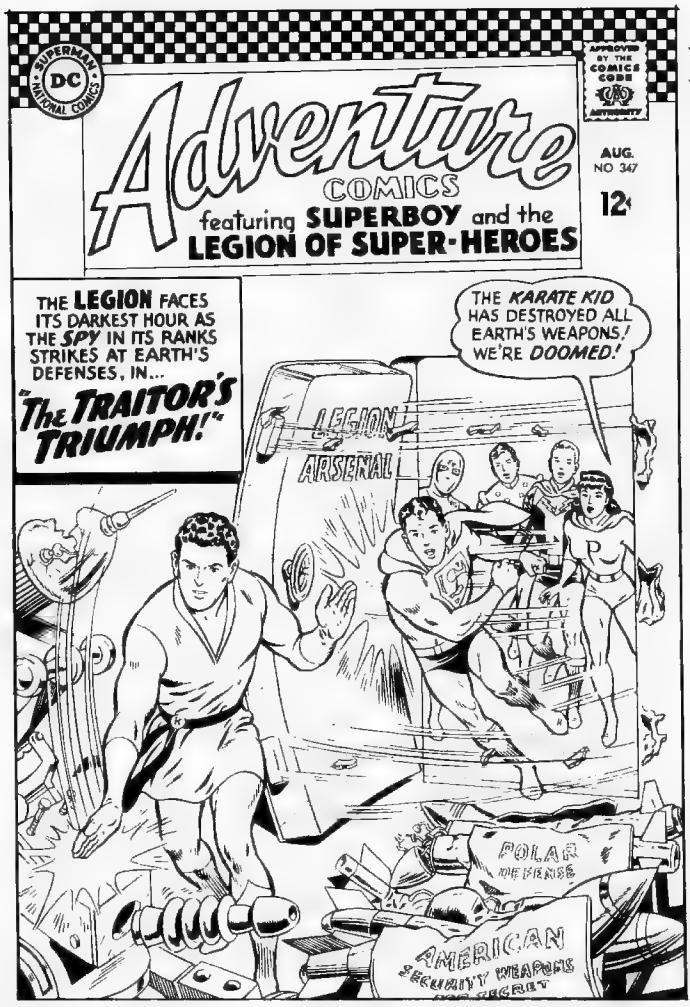


Adventure Comics #346-347, July-August 1966
"One of Us Is A Traitor" and "The Traitor's Triumph"
Story: Jim Shooter
Art (#346): Sheldon Moldoff
Art (#347): Curt Swan and George Klein
46 pages

This was Shooter's first published Legion story, although it wasn't the first one he wrote (that being **Adventure** #348's "Target — 21 Legionnaires"). But while that dilutes some of the poetic audacity of the move, let it still be said that not very many writers could introduce four brand new Legionnaires in their first stories and get away with it.

This two-parter was built around the premise that one of the four newcomers was an infiltrator, one whose mission was to smooth the way for an invasion of Earth by a warlike race at the edge of the universe: The Khunds. Even by that point in the Legion chronicles, it was unthinkable that any of the current members could turn against truth, justice and the humanoid way, so Shooter simply made up his own new characters to serve the story's purposes.

The four were Karate Kid, Princess Projectra, Ferro Lad and Nemesis Kid, and their initiation tests and induction into the Legion served as a 12-page introduction to the larger story.

That, in itself, was a significant departure from the way most Legionnaires had been shown joining the gang. Typically, during the series' early days, we'd see the Legionnaires holding court outside their clubhouse, instantly judging a group of applicants whose principal purpose usually was to provide a bit of comic relief before the story got down to business. But here, Shooter brought forward four credible candidates—one whose qualification was his total mastery of all the martial arts, another who could create terrifyingly convincing illusions, a third whose mutant ability enabled him to turn himself into living iron, giving himself super-strength and the closest thing to invulnerability this side of Superboy, and finally, one whose "alchemical skill" provided him with the power necessary to defeat any single nemesis.

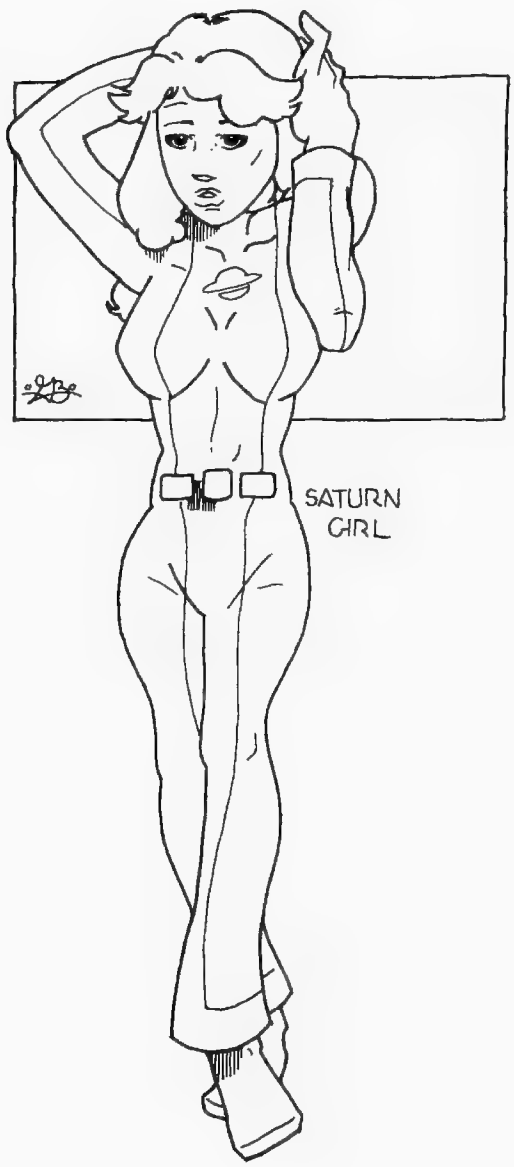
In addition, Shooter established that the four had passed their qualifying tests—the first indication that more than a walk-on audition was necessary for a candidate to join the Legion, and something that foreshadowed the introduction of the Legion Academy two years later. And the sudden induction of so many new members was justified, logically enough, by Acting Leader Superboy's statement that the recent departures of Bouncing Boy, who had lost his power, and Star Boy, who was expelled after killing a man in self-defense, had left the Legion short-handed. In 1966, at least, no one was afraid to juggle around the membership a bit.

With a set-up like that, the initiations couldn't be sloughed off. So the four had a chance to show off their powers by methods of their own choosing. Princess Projectra threw a major scare into the Legionnaires by making them think she had instantly transported them elsewhere: first into the ocean deep and then into deep outer space. Nemesis Kid defeated a multipowered atomic robot (". . .fewer than a dozen superheroes have ever beaten one"). Ferro Lad demonstrated his strength and near-invulnerability at the hands of the Legionnaires (although he never did find out, then or later, what could have happened had he and Cosmic Boy tangled one-on-one).

And Karate Kid *did* get a one-on-one tangle—when he challenged Superboy to a fight. The Boy of Steel won that one, but he conceded that anyone who could give him the kind of tussle that Karate Kid offered deserved to be in the Legion. The whole sequence was a bit pat, but it served its purpose by leaving no doubt about what these new folks were capable of doing.

And so it was that the newcomers were sworn in just in time to view a United Planets film illustrating the massive military threat posed by the recently detected Khund—a film that proved to be more revealing than the Legion had expected. A Khund agent had inserted some footage bringing the Legionnaires greetings and worst wishes from Garlak, the Oriental-looking warlord of Khund, who announced that his forces would attack and destroy Earth in one hour if the planet didn't surrender.

(Why was Earth the Khund target? And how could the Khund fleet slip undetected into the vicinity of Earth without attracting the notice of the United Planets, whose aid, Superboy said, Earth couldn't hope to summon in time to save the planet? Details, details. Shooter made no attempt to answer those obvious questions, although they could be easily enough rationalized by a reader left to his or her own devices. Back in '66, we didn't worry about such things . . .)



Not to fear, in any event. With Earth's military strategists presumably scared to death that the Khund could knock the planet flat with a single blow, some secret preparations had been made: Superboy had helped to erect three flimsy-looking "electro-towers" that, we're told, could blast any and all attackers from the sky. It was clear that those towers had to be protected at any cost, so three Legion task forces sped off to keep them safe from attack or sabotage by the spies Garlak announced he had planted on Earth. As you might expect, each of the three Legion groups included at least one rookie—significant, of course, because as Garlak chuckled to one of his officers after the Legion had finished watching the film, the Khund infiltration extended into the Legion itself. Who was the bad guy?

After a skirmish at the Alaska tower, one that had been sabotaged and was destroyed by a lone Khund attack craft, the evidence seemed to point to Karate Kid, who told Cosmic Boy and Phantom Girl that he was slugged from behind and knocked senseless just before the tower went up in smoke. Who could believe a story like that, especially when KK had emerged without a scratch, right? Certainly not Phantom Girl, who had so loyally defended a previous apparent traitor, Ultra Boy, in #316, and now pointed the first accusing finger.

With one tower down and two to go, the trio took off to Ceylon, site of one of the remaining lines of defense—Phantom Girl stewing over her suspicions the whole way. The heroes guarding the third tower, at Tierra del Fuego, joined them on Ceylon, obeying Cosmic Boy's summons and leaving their post unattended for reasons never explained. Inevitably enough, then, the South American tower was attacked once the assembled Legionnaires sat down to discuss their options thousands of miles away. That initial attack was thwarted easily enough when a group of the time-tested Legionnaires rushed to the tower's defense . . . but then, a literal bolt out of the blue fried the tower into slag—a bolt that could only have come from the Ceylon tower. Two down, one to go.

Did I say *one*? By the time the Legionnaires returned to Ceylon, that tower was gone, too, the Legion defenders who had stayed behind having been knocked out by a sneak gas attack. Conclusion: only a Legionnaire could have released the gas inside the top-security compound. And who could that Legionnaire be? The heroes looked around and saw that not only was Karate Kid nowhere to be found, but with a bit of telescopic snooping by Superboy, found he was racing to the clubhouse, where Earth's last-ditch hope, the Legion's own arsenal, was stashed.

So, with no time to waste, the Legionnaires rushed to Metropolis, there to find KK inside a chamber full of wrecked weapons. It was confrontation time: With the Kid cornered, the Legionnaires were ready to avenge his treachery. "All right! You've got me! I surrender!" came the reply—from Nemesis Kid, who turned out to be in the room as well, unbeknownst to Karate Kid, who had thought the Legion's threats had been directed at him. That slip exonerated Karate Kid—and Nemesis Kid probably wanted to kick himself straight to Cygnus VII for being such a dummy. Not exactly the smoothest plot twist ever seen in comics; but no matter. The Khund armada was at that very moment swooping down to Earth, and there was no time for anyone to worry about technicalities like that.

But surprise! Earth wasn't helpless after all. The alien fleet was blasted out of the sky by a *fourth* electro-tower, built secretly by Superboy as an ace in the hole during the confusion between the earlier attacks on the other electro-towers. And boy, was Garlak pissed—so furious, in fact, that his face and costume had somehow lost their Oriental features. With only a few ships remaining, not nearly enough to launch even a minor assault against Earth, he decided, what the heck, as long as he was in the neighborhood, he'd attack and destroy that meddling Legion.

Wrong move, bozo. The Legionnaires, on their Dick Tracyish jet platforms (seen in this story for the first and only time), put their powers to work to wipe out the last of the Khund attack ships. And every last one of them went down but for the command ship, which Karate Kid tackled on his own. His flight ring had been damaged earlier and his jet platform was too clumsy for close-quarters maneuvering, so there was only one thing left to do: leap down a few hundred feet to the speeding command ship in the sky over Metropolis. Leap, that is, and coin one of comics' classic lines on his way down: "If I miss, I promise never to do this again!" Well-spoken. And he didn't have to keep that promise, either. After chopping his way into the craft, he overpowered Garlak, brought the ship down to a rough landing and, in the process, proved his loyalty to the Legion beyond any doubt.

Afterward, he explained why he'd scooted back to Metropolis earlier without a word: he'd suspected Nemesis Kid's treachery but didn't want to air his suspicions until he was certain; so he trailed the other Kid. And, speaking of that particular future member of the Legion of Super-Villains, Nemesis Kid didn't exactly get the last laugh, but he did escape the Legion's vengeance. His power wasn't great enough to let him defeat more than one Legionnaire at a time, so it gave him the means to flee; it teleported him away, and that was the last anyone saw of him until **Adventure** #372.

When Shooter started out in comics, he knew nothing about the traditional movie-like scripts that writers—at DC, anyway—used in telling their stories. Instead, he drew the stories, panel by panel, providing detailed scenes and pencilling in the dialogue and narration. His pages then were passed along to the artists. In the case of Curt Swan, as Shooter said in his interview in **Outpost** #8, the layouts were either followed faithfully or else improved upon.

Just as it's possible for a close reader today to determine in most cases whether Swan drew a story from a script or from a plot, Marvel-style (script-first, Swan's art tends to be an orderly procession of traditional panels, while plot-first, there's more variety), the difference between Swan's Shooter-scripted stories and those he drew by other writers is unmistakeable. If you don't believe me, check out Swan's stories from 1968 and 1969, comparing the Legion stories with those he drew that appeared elsewhere. You'll be surprised at how easy it is to pick out the Swan-drawn stories in other Superman Family titles that Shooter wrote from time to time.

In 1966, Shooter wasn't inclined to suggest odd panel sizes or shapes, but you can still see the results of his unique way of writing stories. The first issue of this two-parter, drawn by Sheldon Moldoff, is characterized by uncomplicated scenes and a noticeable lack of backgrounds, to the point of being stark in its simplicity. The second story, while following the same pattern, was clearly embellished (and I don't mean inked) by Swan, who added some depth and detail that was missing in Moldoff's story.

That second story's also noteworthy for a scene that I don't recall ever being repeated in the fifteen years since it appeared: a head-on view of Superboy using his super-vision. It makes for a nifty effect and I'm surprised that no one has ever thought to give it another try.

Dialogue and narration in this two-parter was sparse and to the point; in that respect, it didn't depart significantly from the dialogue of previous issues, which is one of the major reasons Shooter's debut wouldn't have been noticed by the casual reader. If anything, in fact, Shooter tended to be even more terse than his predecessors. On the other hand, his dialogue and narration were less stilted—and when certain moments presented themselves, the direct simplicity became an asset. There was Karate Kid's bit of self-assuring glibness as he leaped down to the Khund ship and, in another case, Ferro Lad's comment to himself when his jet platform was shot down; he launched his iron self at the ship that had targeted him, rolling into a cannonball on the way, and thought, "I wonder what happens if this doesn't work? Huh! I'll never get anywhere being a pessimist!" He hit his mark, in more ways than one; that comment set the tone for the wise-cracking that we'd see until his death half a year later.

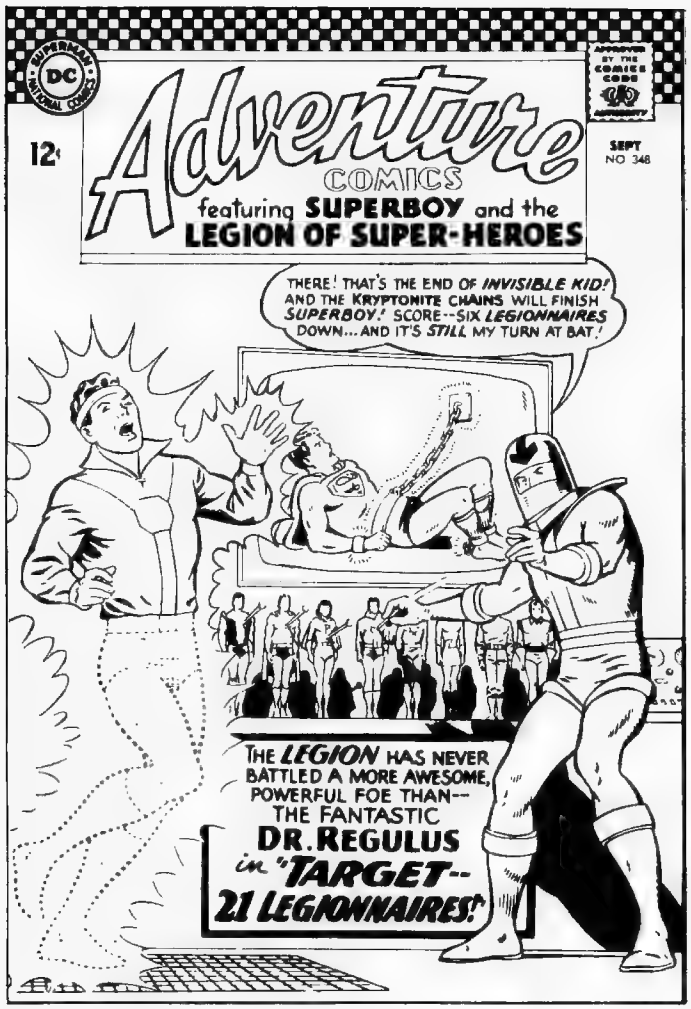
And half a year earlier, we saw what happened when a Legionnaire killed in self-defense. In this story, there can be no question that plenty of Khunds went down in flames to their eternal alien rewards through the actions, direct or indirect, of the Legionnaires—especially through those of Superboy, who built the crucial fourth electro-tower that came close to wiping out the attacking fleet. While we see some of the Khunds bailing out to safety during the battles in which the Legionnaires took a direct, personal role, there still can be no doubt that no small number of the invaders died in action. Star Boy was canned in **Adventure** #342 for killing one man in self-defense; here, hundreds or thousands must have bought it while the Legion defended Earth. Where is the line drawn? I guess we have to conclude that the Legion Constitution had been amended by that time to permit the use of deadly force in self-defense.

A few final notes . . .

After starting out as a backup feature in **Adventure** #300 and moving into the book's lead spot about a year later, the Legion finally graduated to full-length status with #346. With a couple of exceptions, all subsequent Legion stories were full-lengthers until the series left **Adventure** with #380 and became the new backup in **Action Comics**, swapping places with Supergirl.

According to the circulation figures published in #346, the average monthly circulation of **Adventure** during the 12 months ending October 1, 1965 was 520,440, including 10,440 subscriptions. The average print run was 757,000. Today, anyone who could produce a book with that kind of consistent circulation or sales percentage (just under 69%) would have to have a fully functioning Miracle Machine at his side—and that probably wouldn't be enough. By way of comparison, the figures for **The Legion of Super-Heroes** during the year that ended October 1, 1979, were 162,265 sold, including 1,870 subscriptions, with a sales percentage a fraction over 50%. And numbers like those aren't bad at all these days for a book at either DC or Marvel, even considering the inaccuracies built into the sales figures that are published.

Those of you, who, like Carol Strickland in this issue of the **Outpost**, wish the Adult Legion story had never appeared can cast some of the blame in the direction of Sharleen Sopowitz of Brooklyn NY. Her suggestion in #347's lettercol that it was high time for some of the Legionnaires to get married prompted Weisinger to reply, "Suppose we gave you an 'Imaginary Story' which shows [the Legionnaires'] lives as adults. Then you'd get a preview peek at the marriages to come." Weisinger habitually hinted at stories to come that never materialized . . . but that one did, although not as an imaginary story. At least, not officially as one. But now that alternate, equally valid, futures are accepted in the DC universe, who's to say just what kind of status the Adult Legion story really has these days?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THERE! THAT'S THE END OF INVISIBLE KID! AND THE KRYPTONITE CHAINS WILL FINISH SUPERBOY! SCORE--SIX LEGIONNAIRES DOWN...AND IT'S STILL MY TURN AT BAT!
THE LEGION HAS NEVER BATTLED A MORE AWESOME, POWERFUL FOE THAN--
THE FANTASTIC
DR. REGULUS
in "TARGET--
21 LEGIONNAIRES!"

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Adventure Comics #348, September 1966
"Target — 21 Legionnaires"
Story: Jim Shooter
Art: George Papp
24 pages

This, of course, is the story with which Jim Shooter broke into comics. To say its sale turned out to be a gold mine for him wouldn't be stretching things, although I don't think I'll risk drawing a parallel between that and the fact that the story's villain, Dr. Regulus, was the master of gold—radioactive gold at that, which he used to harness incalculable amounts of solar energy.

And with appropriate symmetry, the greatest threat to Regulus was posed by Sun Boy—not because of the Legionnaire's power but because of what the Legionnaire knew about the would-be conqueror of the universe.

So, riding high in his giant gold-plated spaceship, Regulus took the first step in his plan of domination: He removed Sun Boy from the picture, inflicting him from afar—by means never explained—with a bad case of amnesia during a Legion charity performance at the Metropolis Arena. At the same time, realizing the rest of the Legion still posed a formidable threat to his scheme, Regulus used his spaceship to snatch the Legion Clubhouse, lock, stock and rocket fins, thus setting the stage for the trap that would dispose of the Legion for good.

During the chaos at the arena caused by the earthquake the clubhouse-snatching created, the befuddled Sun Boy slipped away. He found refuge in a nuclear power plant, where he stopped to rest and try to figure out who he was and why everyone seemed to be chasing after him—everyone, that is, but the Legionnaires, who had a somewhat weightier matter on their minds once they learned their headquarters had vanished. Perhaps it wasn't the best move on the Legionnaires' part, since Sun Boy, now alone, fell into a weary sleep—a few feet away from a "carelessly opened power source" that bathed him in deadly radiation.

Meanwhile, back at the ranch, the Legionnaires shifted their base of operations into one of their space cruisers. They quickly picked up Regulus's trail in a scene that provided one of comics' all-time best unintended giggles: As Invisible Kid piloted the cruiser into the sky to confront Regulus, we saw him intent at the controls, hands firmly grasping the airplane-style *steering wheel* and his foot resolutely on . . . *the gas pedal*. Must have been one of the Legion's early model crusiers.

(Lest you think I'm being 100 per cent facetious with that last comment, let me remind you that a point was made of introducing the Legion's new-model cruiser in #343; the ones seen in the Regulus story had more in common with artist John Forte's model than with the one Curt Swan designed five months earlier. So there.)

If that's the case, then it's just as well that the Legionnaires were riding one of the old models into battle—because Regulus totalled it with a glancing touch of his solar-powered destruction ray. The Legionnaires escaped without injury and pressed their attack, thanks to their flight rings; Superboy ripped through the hull of the golden spaceship and the heroes entered. Problem: The Legionnaires had no idea who or what was aboard, and saw no signs of life once inside it. So they split up to search the craft's many passageways, Superboy apparently having forgotten how handy his super-vision could be in a situation like that.

And one by one, Regulus nailed them.

First, it was Colossal Boy, who found himself trapped in a huge chamber (which he'd entered, thanks to George Papp, by turning *the door knob*; that giggle misses the cut, though, I'm afraid). He grew to colossal size to face whatever his mysterious enemy had to offer. But he'd been anticipated; a panel in the wall slid open and out clanked a giant robot. The fight was over in seconds.

On a more human level, Duo Damsel and Phantom Girl were decoyed by a life-size Cosmic Boy robot that overcame them with sleeping gas. And that robot, its power boosted by Regulus's sun force, bested Brainiac 5; it didn't quite crack Brainy's force shield, but it did manage to knock him out, presumably by the impact of the blow that crashed Brainy against a bulkhead.

As for the real Cosmic Boy, he blundered into a set of golden clamps that had been set into the wall. Green Kryptonite, that ever-present bane of the Boy of Steel, overcame Superboy. (Gold K would have been more appropriate, natch, but couldn't be used for obvious reasons . . .) And a beam of "pure golden sunlight" zapped Invisible Kid—though we were never told how it could affect him while he was out of sight.

And with that, Regulus was set to complete the first stage of his plan: Destroying the Legionnaires by turning his ship's power inward, disintegrating the heroes.

But with his hand inches from the switch, he faced an unexpected guest: Sun Boy. With Regulus away from the controls that kept some of the Legionnaires helpless, the gang rushed in to save Sun Boy from Regulus' desperate barrage of small missiles. The ship's stun beams kept the Legionnaires at bay while Regulus made his escape in a lifeboat, thus setting up his undistinguished return six years later, in **Superboy** #191.

By way of wrapping up, the Legionnaires rifled Regulus' files to find out where he'd hidden their clubhouse. Once they'd

QUICK, INVISIBLE KID! HANG A LEFT AT PLUTO!
HANG ON, SUPERBOY! IF I GO OVER 50,000, I'LL STRIP THE GEARS!
I COULD DO BETTER BY MYSELF!
DEAN G

returned it to Metropolis, courtesy of the captured golden spaceship's awesome power, they prepared to study the craft. But it self-destructed once they were clear of it; in the grand tradition of super-villains, the spaceship had been booby-trapped to explode if it fell into the wrong hands.

And what of Sun Boy's convenient last-second appearence? That question gave Shooter an excuse to review his origin: Dirk Morgna had worked after school at the atomic plant his father managed. One day, Dirk accidentally interrupted an experiment being conducted by Dr. Zaxton Regulus, who was working on a means of tapping solar power, using radioactive gold as the medium. The experiment blew up in everyone's face and Regulus blamed Dirk for ruining the project. Late one night, Regulus brought in some robots to work Dirk over as revenge, and left him to die in the atomic reactor. But *Shazam!* Instead of killing him, the radioactivity revived Dirk and infused him with solar powers of his own, thus giving birth to Sun Boy.

Little wonder, then that the "deadly radiation" the amnesiac Sun Boy was later exposed to at the nuclear power plant was not at all deadly to one who had gained super-powers by the same means. This time, the radiation had a revitalizing effect on Sun Boy, restoring his memory in the process, after which he was easily able to deduce what had happened, who was responsible, and where the rest of his Legion buddies had gone.

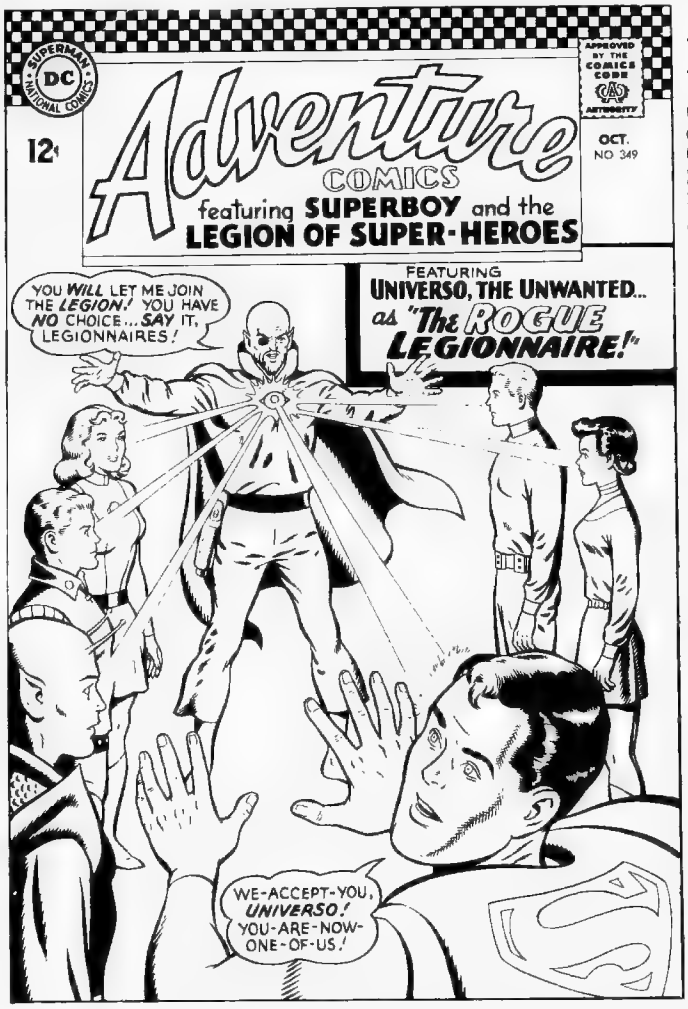
A couple of nice things about this story: The first few pages were given over to Invisble Kid's election as Legion Leader—and in the process, we learned of Duo Damsel's crush on Superboy. Invisible Kid was the first member outside the circle of long-time prominent members to win the job. The whole story could have easily been told in the earlier two-thirds-booklength format, but the addition of a sequence like the election here—which had nothing to do with the story but was significant in the larger picture—was no waste of space.

Also, Shooter used a plot technique that would recur in the next issue and many times afterward in his stories: He had the Legionnaires split up, and devoted a page or so to each of their individual battles instead of involving them in free-for-alls in which no one got to star. This sort of thing is more important than it might seem because it graphically shows what each of these heroes can accomplish, and why they have the names they do—something Gerry Conway and company many times fail to keep in mind. Shooter faltered here in one case, though: Duo Damsel never got to show off her power.

Adventure Comics #349, October 1966
"The Rogue Legionnaire"
Story: Shooter
Art: Swan and Klein
24 pages

Here we have the second story in three months that promises a threat from within—but in this case, the threat is nothing more than a literary straw man. There it is on the cover: bald, bearded, overaged "Universo the Unwanted" mesmerizing the Legionnaires into accepting him as a member. The scene actually appears in the story, too, so Shooter or Weisinger gets a point for that concession; but it doesn't count for anything because it doesn't have a thing to do, directly or indirectly, with the story—or with the larger Legion saga. Maybe Uncle Mortie discovered somewhere along the line that sales shot up any time a cover indicated the presence of a turncoat or criminal in the ranks, or maybe Shooter just thought it would be a nice touch; in any event, as the Legion entered its fifth year in **Adventure**, there had already been plenty of such covers. (Check them out: issues #294, 316, 318, 321, 326, 328, 333, 338, 341, 342, 346 and 347, along with a few others that could go either way.)

Even so, this story is one of my favorite tales of the Legion, not for any overwhelming reason but for a number of small things that added up to an enjoyable whole: The unusual story structure; the introduction of a new piece of Legion gear, the time cube; the first appearance of Rond Vidar, a talented, understated teenager who would become an honorary Legionnaire in #360; and the deft execution of the plot, which climaxed with a surprise that worked perfectly. It was Shooter's first excellent story, and in retrospect, he certainly hit his stride early on.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Adventure COMICS
featuring SUPERBOY and the LEGION OF SUPER-HEROES
OCT. NO 349
FEATURING UNIVERSO, THE UNWANTED... as "The ROGUE LEGIONNAIRE!"
YOU WILL LET ME JOIN THE LEGION! YOU HAVE NO CHOICE... SAY IT, LEGIONNAIRES!
WE-ACCEPT-YOU, UNIVERSO! YOU-ARE-NOW-ONE-OF-US!

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It opened at the Metropolis Students Science Fair, where the Legionnaires oohed and aahed at the kids' sophisticated projects. One in particular caught their eyes: A collapsible time cube built by Rond that could project matter through the fourth dimension. The Legionnaires voted him the first prize, but took an early leave from the award presentation when Brainiac 5 received an alarm from the Legion Clubhouse: Someone was trying to break in.

That someone was Universo, and the Legionnaires confronted him without the usual threats and pyrotechnics. While Universo was busy pounding on the door, the Legionnaires snuck in the back way and were ready to greet him, six of them seated calmly in the council chamber, when the villain finally decided enough was enough and blasted his way in with a handgun—of the Thirtieth Century variety.

It seems all Universo wanted to do was to swipe one of the Legion's time bubbles. But now that he was on the spot, the villain ad libbed that he wanted to join the Legion. No one pretended to be fooled. Seeing as how the Legion, as Superboy put it, wasn't recruiting housebreakers (and anyway, their visitor was too old), the heroes presumably were ready to show him the door—the kind with iron bars and no glass—when Universo persisted: "At least let me demonstrate my power." And before the Legionnaires could react, they were under his thrall, victims of the hypnotic eye-pendant Universo wore. Brainy resisted the spell, but he couldn't prevent Universo from taking one bubble and destroying the rest.

As soon as Universo disappeared, the spell on the Legionnaires vanished—except in the case of Superboy, thanks, apparently, to some kryptonite dust in Universo's pendant. So much for Superboy for the rest of the story. The others—well, it would take weeks for them to build another time bubble to chase Universo, so after learning that some time travel activity had been detected in five periods of Earth's past, they raced back to the science fair to enlist Rond's help. (One minor point: Of course the Legionnaires could just have easily taken as many weeks, months, or years as they needed to rebuild their time bubble fleet, to investigate those eras at their leisure. But this was long before comics fans had an Omniversal Theory of Time Travel to end the notion of fixed-duration time links between any given past and present moment. Evidently, Thirtieth Century time travel technology comes out of a science still in its infancy, a likelihood reinforced by the very name of the outfit that cued in the Legion on Universo's time travel activities: The Chrono-*Research* Lab.)

After Rond expanded his time cube to full size, the Legionnaires hopped in and vanished into the past, one at a time: Shrinking Violet to Egypt in 1243 B.C.; Chameleon Boy to Incan Peru in 1300 A.D.; Colossal Boy to England in 693 A.D.; Saturn Girl to Paris in 1812; and Brainy to China in 1280 A.D. Thence followed their solo adventures as they snooped around for signs of Universo's presence and became the targets of the villain's agents in those eras—agents all in place and ready to face the Legionnaires by the time they arrived, mere subjective minutes later but, thanks to the miracle of relative time and imprecisions of state-of-the-art time travel, hours or days after Universo had already come and gone.

The thing I liked most about Shooter's approach to time travel here is that he didn't fall prey to the temptation to involve the Legionnaires in crucial moments of civilized history. These segments turned out to be superficially informative about those eras—perhaps even a bit educational—but the closest brush with textbook history involved Saturn Girl's brief and insignificant encounter with Napoleon. It was a welcome relief from the typical Weisinger tales of meetings with the giants of the past; by the mid-60s, it seemed the only historical figure to have escaped such a dubious fate was Jesus Christ.

By the time Shooter cut away from each Legionnaire, he or she was moments away from certain death through the attacks by Universo's stooges. Cham, who had taken the form of an Incan sun god, tumbled into a live volcano during a fight; a tiny Violet, winged by an attacking falcon, plunged to the ground and was about to be trampled by a horse; a medieval army forced Colossal Boy to the brink of a cliff, and then over; Saturn Girl was about to be fried by one of those Thirtieth Century handguns, which Universo had given to a hypnotized confidant of Napoleon; and Brainy, chained and unable to reach his force shield controls, was about to be fatally gonged—centuries before Chuck Barris was the merest gleam on anyone's TV screen. Brainy escaped that trap, only to find the heat was on when he was cornered by a mechanical fire-breathing dragon. In each case, in fact, Shooter let the Legionnaires escape one doom, only to put them in the clutches of new ones before they could catch their breath.

And so it was that Universo, confident that the Legion was out of the scene for good—its members dead or, presumably, off Earth—swaggered into the United Planets Council building, intending to pull his familiar hypnotic stunt on the major powers of the Thirtieth Century. But he was in for a rude surprise: The Legionnaires were back, disguised as the various leaders and now conditioned to resist his pendant's power. They revealed that Rond had monitored them while they were in the past and had managed to yank each of them home in the nick of time. Universo was trussed up in a straitjacket and hauled off, babbling, to the pokey.

Universo had been in for a major shock—not so much the Legionnaires' escape as the identity of their savior, Rond. Because, as Rond tearfully told the Legionnaires, Universo was his father. The story's final panel brought out all the pathos and trauma of the revelation without running it into the ground. I don't think I've ever seen anything like that done better.

AND IN ONE OF THE LONELY, DARK ALLEYWAYS OF THE GREAT CITY, A TIRED BOY SITS...
I HAD TO HELP THEM... I COULDN'T LET HIM KILL THEM... BUT... HE'S MY FATHER... AND NOW I MAY NEVER SEE HIM AGAIN!
THE END
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Oh, yes: Superboy was finally brought out of the ozone by Brainy, who used Universo's pendant to counteract the hypnotic spell.

I have two quibbles with this story, neither of them particularly important: the inclusion of the Universo-joining-the-Legion scene, which had no significance other than providing a cover for the issue; and the aside that the scientist at the Chrono-Research Lab, who tipped off the Legionnaires to Universo's time travel activity, was another of the villain's pawns. While that wasn't implausible and didn't affect the story's internal consistency, it didn't add anything, either.

But I'm willing to endure things like that—which are really insignificant, passive problems—in return for stories like these. They didn't make 'em like this before Shooter came along, and to say they don't make many like this any more would be the understatement of this or any other century.

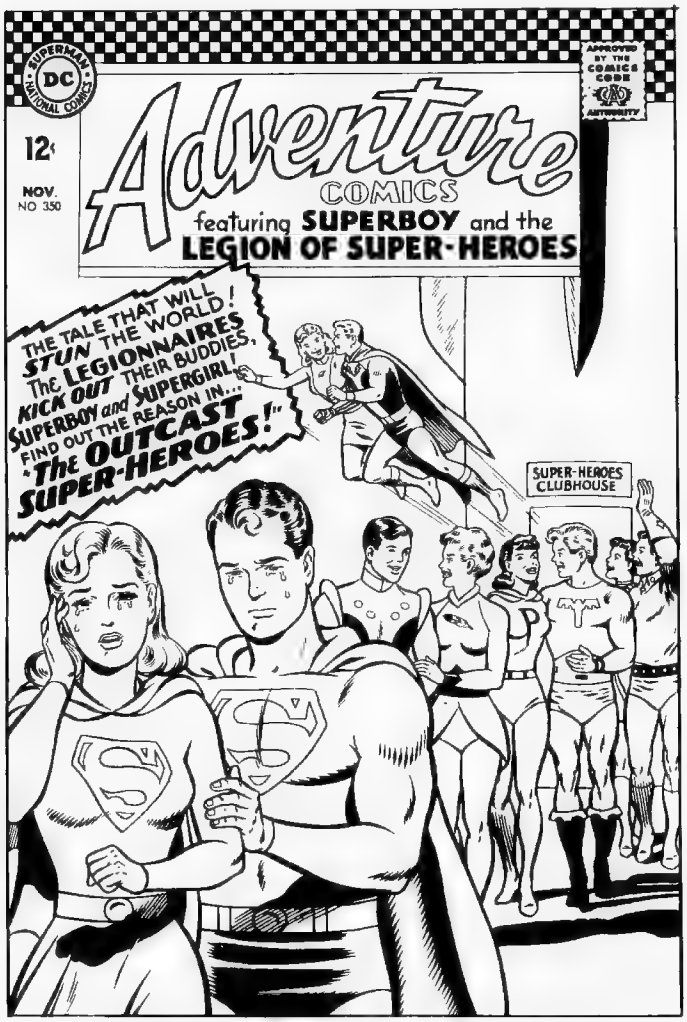
Adventure Comics #350-351, Nov.-Dec. 1966
"The Outcast Super-Heroes" and
"The Forgotten Legion"
Story: E. Nelson Bridwell
Art: Swan and Klein
47 pages

With all the talk about the "Shooter-era" Legion, let's not forget the contribution made by Nelson Bridwell, who was the only writer to fill in for Shooter during that time other than Otto Binder, who contributed one short story in the back of **Adventure** #355. Bridwell, then as now, was a competent writer reared in the old school, who wasn't given to overplaying his hand by introducing complexities in an effort to beef up an essentially simple plot. (Some writers today tend to use the literary equivalent of hamburger extender—but that's another matter. Alas.)

Given enough space, Bridwell has shown that he can construct not a complex story but an *elaborate* one. There's a difference. The former is a story that tugs on several different plot threads until they all come together after 20 pages . . . or 20 issues; the latter focuses on a single thread, following it over hill and dale, covering plenty of ground, until the payoff suddenly comes into view.

That's what Bridwell did in this two-parter.

It opens with something strange surrounding the situation on Thirtieth-Century Earth—something strange in the form of a cloud of green kryptonite dust surrounding the entire planet. Brainiac 5 predicted it wouldn't dissipate for at least two years because of the strong attraction of Earth's magnetic field, and the best efforts of the Legionnaires failed to loosen that grip.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NOV. NO 350
Adventure COMICS
featuring SUPERBOY and the LEGION OF SUPER-HEROES
THE TALE THAT WILL STUN THE WORLD! The LEGIONNAIRES KICK OUT THEIR BUDDIES, SUPERBOY and SUPERGIRL! FIND OUT THE REASON IN... "The OUTCAST SUPER-HEROES!"
SUPER-HEROES CLUBHOUSE

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DEC. NO. 351
Adventure COMICS
featuring SUPERBOY and the LEGION OF SUPER-HEROES
SMALLVILLE
FEATURING... "THE FORGOTTEN LEGION!"
SUPERBOY! YOU MUST GET YOUR MEMORY BACK AND HELP US! DOESN'T THIS CLUBHOUSE WE BROUGHT HERE FROM THE FUTURE REMIND YOU OF THE LEGION? DON'T YOU REMEMBER ME—COLOSSAL BOY?
LEGION? I NEVER HEARD OF IT! NOW GET THAT EYESORE OUT OF SMALLVILLE BEFORE I DEMOLISH IT!
SMALLVILLE CLEAN-UP CAMPAIGN KEEP OUR CITY BEAUTIFUL
SUPER-HERO CLUBHOUSE

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That state of affairs might cause a problem or two for Superboy and Supergirl, predictably enough. And so they were summoned to the Thirtieth Century, first to glimpse the Legion's last, futile efforts to destroy the cloud and then, with regrets, to be honorarily discharged—at least, until the cloud passed.

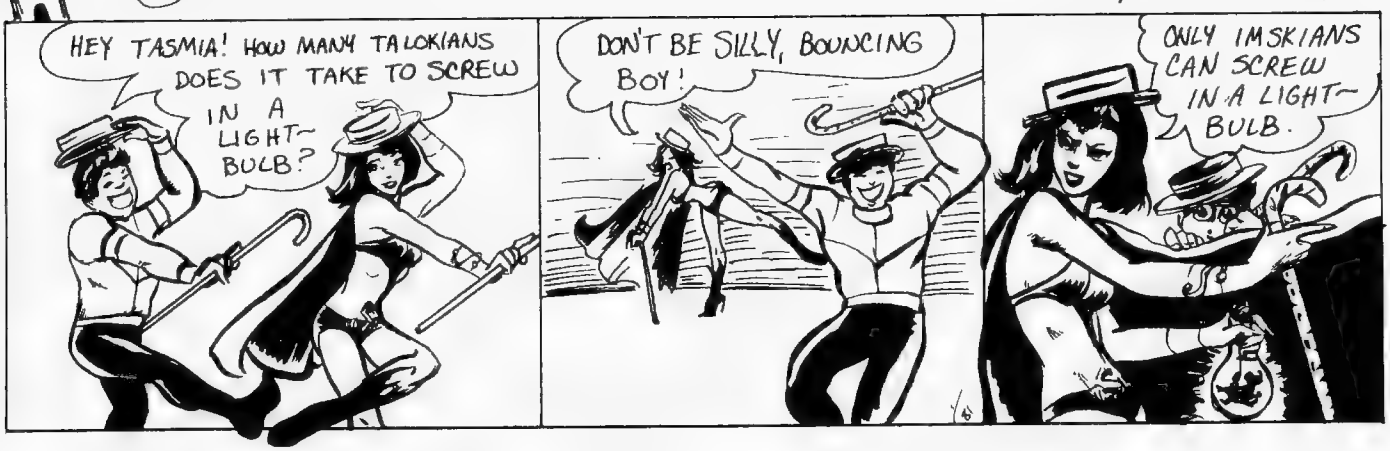
Brainy warmed up the time cube and retrieved the Legion statuettes and signaling devices the super-cousins kept in the Twentieth Century; then, quite formally, the two were presented with mementoes of their Thirtieth Century adventures. Well, Supergirl said, at least we'll have something to remember the Legion by, right? Wrong, kiddo. The mementoes would have to stay behind and she and Superboy would be brainwashed of all the knowledge of the Legion. Invisible Kid explained the last was necessary because the two might accidentally spill some of the Legion's secrets once they returned to the past.

Now here's a case of how 15 years can change the way a reader—and a writer—deals with comics. In 1966, all the Legionnaires kept a naturally straight face when they heard Invisible Kid's explanation, and even we accepted it at face value. Today, conditioned by a decade and a half of modern funnybooks, we'd say Waitaminnit, something's up here; it's no more probable that Superboy and Supergirl would blab anything after leaving the Legion than they would if they were still members, and the Legionnaires have gotta know something they aren't telling. But then was then and now is now, and we don't suspend our disbelief the way we once did.

So, then. How do you brainwash a couple of super-powered Kryptonians? The answer's easy—especially if you've just seen *Fantastic Voyage*, which had just made the rounds of the

Legion Follies

by BRENT & MERCY


HEY TASMIA! HOW MANY TALOKIANS DOES IT TAKE TO SCREW IN A LIGHT-BULB?
DON'T BE SILLY, BOUNCING BOY!
ONLY IMSKIANS CAN SCREW IN A LIGHT-BULB.

nation's theatres. Shrinking Violet carried tiny kryptonite capsules to the areas of their brains that, Brainy determined, housed their memories of the Legion. She marveled at the sight of the huge blood cells . . . and almost was eaten by a white corpuscle on her return trip from Superboy's cerebrum. (She wasn't bothered on her way in because she was carrying that kryptonite capsule.) A quick dash to a tear duct got her out in time, with a little help from Superboy's sad memories of life on Krypton.

Before Superboy and Supergirl left for good, they made a final request—actually, it was more of a final demand. They wanted to name their own replacements: A pair called Miss Terious and Sir Prize. The newcomers would be keeping their identities secret, the super-cousins said, and extracted Invisible Kid's reluctant promise that no one would try to penetrate their secret.

And that was it. Superboy and Supergirl hopped into the time cube, their memories already fading, and disappeared. But no sooner did they do so than the clubhouse's front-door alarm sounded. (Continuity-conscious Bridwell remembered from the previous issue that there were indeed front and back entrances!) And who was it who had come calling? None other than Miss Terious and Sir Prize, dressed from head to toe in lead-shielded, robot-like armor. Curiouser and curiouser . . .

The new members were sworn in off-panel and tagged along with the gang to check out an unusual robbery at the Interplanetary Bank. The culprits there were members of Prince Evillo's argumentative Devil's Dozen, which included the Hag, and old crone who rode a jet-powered broom; The Wild Huntsman, a centaur with a storm-creating horn; Apollo, the living personification of a Greek God who didn't mind blowing his own horn about his way with women; and Sugyn, a tub of lard patterned after a Welsh legend, who drank insatiably—drank water, that is. Well, they weren't quite a dozen, but Evillo, who looked and dressed like a devil, was working on filling out the ranks, as we'd soon see.

At the bank, Apollo used his enchanted harp to tame the monstrous sentry beasts and then captivated the female tellers with his irresistable charm. In minutes, he and his nondescript thugs began their getaway with piles of strange currency from different planets—glass coins, needle money, energy money, living crystal cash, chain money, you name it.

The Legionnaires showed up at the tail end of the caper, just in time to mix it up with the guardian beasts, which another tune from Apollo's harp turned against them. After a few not-so-tense moments, the Legionnaires overcame them, including Chameleon Boy, who got the best of a huge, lightning-eyed serpent when he turned into a giant spider and trussed up the beastie. (Once the fight was over, in a case of cross-company continuity—well, after a fashion—Bridwell gave a winking Cham a panel to himself to say: "In case a certain web-headed character thinks I'm stealing his thunder, I'd like to remind him that I was changing to all sorts of weird shapes long before he walked up his first wall!" *Hee!*)

Meanwhile, Lightning Lad and Saturn Girl charged into the bank to collar the crooks. Apollo put his sex appeal to work on Saturn Girl, which kept her occupied while he sicced some living crystal money on Lightning Lad that chewed up his robot arm and short-circuited him into dreamland. Mission accomplished! Apollo wasn't after the money; he was there to capture a Legionnaire. He zipped away with Lightning Lad before the others could pile into their cruisers and do the Thirtieth Century equivalent of burning rubber in pursuit.

Back on Earth, the Legionnaires planned to organize a rescue party, but . . . enter R. J. Brande for the first time ever, with a mayday call. Miss T. and Sir P. wanted in on the action, and the attitude brought the Legionnaires' suspicions about the pair to the surface. Finally, tired of not knowing whether the mystery twins were finks, and judging from the powers they displayed at the bank that they might somehow be Superboy and Supergirl, Ultra Boy said Phooey on this, I wasn't the one who promised not to peek; I'm going to use my penetra-vision to get to the bottom of this. Not smart, eagle eyes! As U-Boy trained his vision on the pair, Invisible Kid gave his jaw five good reasons to remember the virtues of discretion. No insubordination on this Legion Leader's boat . . .

Some of the Legionnaires took off for Brande's estate, which happened to be a small planet. Along the way, they wondered who had put such a scare into their benefactor. Why, it was the Hag, Miss T. piped up. Hmmmm. How could she know that, the others wondered, unless she had telescopic vision?

Cut to another planet, a dark place called Tartarus, where Lightning Lad came to in Evillo's lair. The villain had some plans for him: Specifically, LL was to become the fifth member of the Devil's Dozen. How? Well, he was trapped in a glass chamber into which Evillo fed a gaseous concentration of pure evil—and once it penetrated his body, bye-bye Mr. Good Guy. And it would have worked, too, had Lightning Lad not done the obvious. He simply thought good thoughts, and that was enough to keep the nasty stuff out.

But his power was still on the blink from the short-circuit he'd received—and he remained in Evillo's control, literally disarmed and certainly dismayed.

Back at the Brande estate, the Legionnaires fought their way through the planet's sentry satellites and robot guardians only to encounter the Hag once the landed. She didn't attack; instead, Poof! She materialized a set of photographic portraits, among them one showing Ferro Lad being incinerated into a pile of iron ashes. Miss T. unveiled hers, which showed her alive and well . . . but she wouldn't let Cosmic Boy take a look at his. "It's too dreadful," she warned. Hmmm. How could she know unless she had X-ray vision?

That question would have to wait. In the meantime, she had a plan to counteract the hexes of the now-departed Hag. How do you fight black magic? With white magic, she said—and all she'd need was a brew boiled in iron and stirred with lead, using a recipe that called for a lock of hair from a genuine magician and the print of an enchanted shoe.

Kind of a tall order. The iron and lead were easily enough available on Brande's estate, but as for the other ingredients—well, it was time to call for some help.

So in came the Legion of Substitute Heroes, after a radioed request for assistance from the first-stringers. They were dispatched to Stanhope, U.S.A., 1966. As for the other Legionnaires on Earth, they left Chuck Taine, the former Bouncing Boy, on guard at the clubhouse and took off for Smallville in the 1930s.

Now then, who were the forgetful ones? Why, the Legionnaires, who conveniently forgot that they'd brainwashed Superboy. (Even for 1966, that lapse was a little hard to swallow.) But all it took was a bit of concentration on Element lad's part to turn the kryptonite in Superboy's brain into helium, and then they got down to business.

Who had a convenient supply of magical hair? Young master Mxyzptlk, that's who. Superboy and Mon-El scooted through the dimensional maze and into the fifth-dimensional land of Zrfff. A half-dozen antics later, they made off with their prize. E-Lad then restored the kryptonite to Superboy's brain and the Legionnaries returned to the Thirtieth Century. "Give my regards to Sir Prize," Superboy called after them. Hmmm.

Twenty-odd years later, the subs attracted Supergirl's attention. She didn't have much use for these strangers, but they persuaded her to summon Comet the super-horse and the rest of the super-pets—and in the minor tiff that followed, the ever-insecure Subs lost the battle. But they won the war because Night Girl had used a chunk of sidewalk as a shield when Comet charged her, and picked up his enchanted hoofprint in the process.

Back again to Brande's estate, where Miss Terious fired up the cauldron and cast a spell that, as it turned out, transformed the Hag into her true identity—Xola Aq, the White Witch of the planet Naltor. Hmmm. Cosmic Boy flashed on the connection, and that at last prompted Miss T. and Sir P. to remove their masks: They were Dream Girl and Star Boy, both of whom had previously lost their Legion membership (in #317 and #342, respectively). Both were part of the Substitute Heroes at the time, and crafty Bridwell had left them out of that group's adventure a few pages earlier.

Once greetings and explanations were out of the way, the White Witch led the Legionnaires to Tartarus, where they confronted Evillo. No major battle or anything; Evillo simply informed them that he had captured a few of their comparades—Lightning Lad, Matter-Eater Lad, and Chuck Taine. "Come into the lab," he said, and maybe see what's on the slab—because his doctor had been . . . experimenting on them.

And what to their wondering eyes did appear but a two-armed Lightning Lad, a fat 'n' sassy Bouncing Boy, and a once-again slender M-E Lad. The doc had double-crossed Evillo, and that brought about a quickie fight in which the Legionnaires trounced the Devil's Dozen—and the devil himself—and wrapped up the case.

What of poor Superboy and Supergirl, meanwhile? They showed up in the final panels, safe and sound under a familiar blue Thirtieth Century sky. It seemed that Color Kid was able to neutralize the kryptonite cloud by turning the deadly green dust into a harmless blue. Sound far-fetched? In a later letter column, it was explained that blue K was an isotope of green K, and that that was why the superficial change had been successful. Still sound far-fetched? Well, that's funnybooks for ya.

There were plenty of problems with this story, at least as far as internal plausibility and long-range consistency are concerned—but it was so light-hearted and well-constructed that I can't by a long shot bring myself to dislike it. Bridwell clearly had a lot of fun writing the story, and its fanciful spirit was contagious, even in the midst of some ostensibly serious happenings. There was more wise-cracking per page in this two-parter than in any 10 other Legion stories ("There's the Brandes [sic] estate! It's a small planet!" "Yeah? Why didn't Brandes buy a large one?" "What do you think he is—a showoff?") And Evillo was a caricature of a villain, taking on the sinister appearance of a horned devil but unable to round up more than four largely inept members of an alleged Devil's Dozen.

But the ending was just too blamed happy. While the super-cousins' return to the Legion could be expected, there was no reason to bring everything back to the tidy status quo, from the restoration of Lightning Lad's flesh-and-blood arm to Bouncing Boy's power to Star Boy's and Dream Girl's rejoining the Legion to M-E Lad's quick weight loss. The last, especially, made no sense, since if anyone in the Legion should've been fat, it was Matter-Eater Lad—and he could have taken over Chuck's unevenly handled role as the series' comic relief; heck, as long as his power was laughable, why couldn't the character himself reflect that?

So it goes. In addition to bringing the Legion back to Square One, though, Bridwell added a bit to the Legion's Lore by introducing R.J. Brande—referred to here with an S at the end of his name. (Evidently the tycoon didn't know his S from a hole in . . . his money bin, would you believe?) And Bridwell foreshadowed Ferro Lad's death subtly enough; in fact, a close reader might have guessed two months later that Cosmic Boy would be the one fated to die the dreadful death promised on that issue's cover.

But I'm still wondering what the deal was with the Legion's cruisers. In the first part, we saw one of the George Papp models on the plaza around the Legion Clubhouse, and when the Legionnaires were ready to split for the Interplanetary Bank, Invisible Kid commanded in the clubhouse, "Quick! Turn on the accelerator!" (Whatever that was). In the second part, Swan drew yet another design. And nowhere was there a sign of the "new" model introduced earlier in the year. Thank goodness *Star Trek* came along to give Legion artists something specific to swipe from . . .

MyPLace: "Xanthusian Eyes and Trommite Hearts"

By MIKE FLYNN

One of the questions every diehard Legion fan is eventually asked, usually by a smugly smirking Marv Wolfman or a sincerely curious Mike Gold, is: "Just what's so great about those dumb Legionnaires, anyway?" On several occasions, some fan type or another has looked me over cautiously, maintaining a safe distance while asking that same question. Steve Mitchell, at some convention or another, pointed to a group of us sitting in the audience and said, "Watch out, they're all Legion fans!"

It's curious to see, then, that after all the explanations Legion fans have offered—from just plain *sensawunda*, as Mercy Van Vlack would put it, or *built-in nifty appeal*, as Valeria Beasley once explained to me—some of the answer can be found by sifting through the old **Adventure Comics** letter columns.

As with everything else, after the Legion became the lead feature in **Adventure**, the first few *Smallville Mailsacks* were not quite cohesive. Three out of the first five contained letters berating Mort Weisinger for dropping the *Tales of the Bizarro World* strip in favor of *Tales of the Legion of Super-Heroes*. (One correspondent, in **Adventure** #305, wanted Bizarro to join the Legion. Two years later we were treated to the Bizarro Legion. Thank you, Wayne Stodge of Newark, New Jersey.) At first, the Legion strip was just another Superman Family spin-off, something Jerry Siegel never quite got over, as he incorporated as much of Twentieth Century Earth-1 into as many stories as he could. But even with the "Bits of Legionnaire Business" letter column feature, it was evident again that Mort Weisinger had made a fortuitous choice, and had created, if not a monster, a pituitary mutant.

The hue and cry—well, hue and whisper—caused by the Bizarro bumping demonstrated how participatory the **Adventure** letter column—and the Legion's fans—would become. Allen Pilcher of Memphis, Tennessee, asked in **Adventure** #301 if the editor would encourage "Bits of Legionnaire Business," to replace the "Bits of Bizarro Business" feature, to which the fans had previously submitted their whacky ideas for all the whacky things that Bizarros do. The editorial response was: "Only if you can define for us what's a 'bit of L.B.'" Sure enough, Buddy Le Vigne of Northbrook, Ill. took up the challenge, and in #304 said: " . . . how about if a 'Bit of Legionnaire Business' is a postal card with a few lines suggesting the name of a *new* super hero to be admitted to the Legion, plus a suggestion of the power he might possess." Le Vigne also submitted the very first *Bit of Legionnaire Business* in that letter, a hero named Polar Boy.

Of course, over the years, several other characters created by readers became comic book reality, from The Super-Heroes of Lallor to Spider Girl and Radiation Roy of the Legion of Super-Villains, right on down to Porcupine Pete, used by Cary Bates in **Superboy** #201, but suggested in **Adventure** #342 by David Krels of Milwaukee, Wisconsin. There was a controversy over who had come up with the idea for Color Kid, but Jeff Greenberg of Los Angeles had sent his *Bit* in first. He then made a career for himself of writing letters, flushing with pride, each time the Substitute Heroes appeared in a story.

Of course, one other interesting "Bit of Legionnaire Business" should probably be mentioned. Legion fans have for years suggested alternative possible identities for the doomed Power Boy, from Tyroc to Wildfire to Jed Rikane. It turns out that in **Adventure** #340, Steven Petryszyn of Rochester, N.Y., suggested a hero who could "drain the power—even a super-power—from any object or person and restore it or place it in another person." Now if only something would happen with Reflecto, we'd be all caught up with the Adult Legion story Jim Shooter wrote in **Adventure** #354-55.

In **Adventure** #335, Steven Rosenberry of New York City suggested that readers cast votes for their favorite Legionnaires. The final results were published in **Adventure** #341. Mon-El had defeated Lightning Lad by one vote, prompting one letter writer to bemoan his not having voted, and giving Weisinger a chance to moralize. Phantom Girl won among the women. A story featuring both was promised, but never materialized.

Drawing on this precedent, Tredgar Waller of Rousemont, Minn., suggested that **Adventure** readers vote for the Legion's Leader. A month was given for the balloting, and, when the results were printed in **Adventure** #368, Ultra Boy had won most of the 7,810 votes cast. (Compare this to the most recent election tally in 1978, with only a few *hundred* votes cast. Tsk.)

The letter columns invited a lot of lively discussion. Questions about Duo Damsel seemed to pop up more often than those about other Legionnaires. For instance, it was revealed in **Adventure** #362's column that Duo Damsel's powers were the result of Cargg's triple suns. In **Adventure** #377, concepts involving her memories were discussed. It was explained that anything one of her selves learned while separated was retained when they re-merged. This paved the way for the story entitled "Half A Legionnaire," which appeared in **Action** #380. (In that story, one of Luornu's selves fell in love with a character named Nam'Lor; the tale centered around the struggle within Luornu to control what had happened to her.)

All sorts of things were discussed only in *Smallville Mailsack* (which was eventually retitled, by strange coincidence, *The Legion Outpost*). Rand Lee of Roxbury, Conn., one of the most visible letterhacks of the Shooter era, should have been a card-carrying member of Len Rosenberg's K.A.L.—E.L. (Keep Alien Legionniares Exotic-Looking) Society [see **The Legion Outpost** #6 and #9] because he suggested that non-Terran Legionnaires might have slight physiological differences that could be used in stories to a specific Legionnaire's benefit—or disadvantage, if one thought about it. For instance, Lee said the space-born Star Boy's might have double eyelids, and would therefore be less susceptible to blasts of bright light. Or, a knife through the left side of Element Lad's chest would not be fatal, since Tromites might have hearts that tilt to the right.

The letter columns were buzzing with other interesting questions, questions that were *answered*, sometimes with a Weisinger/Bridwell wisecrack, but more often than not, intelligently, as if the readers weren't children, but maturing human beings. For example, from **Adventure** #354 comes the following:

> **I notice that the interplanetary law-enforcement agency in the Legion's time is called the Science Police. Why Science?**
>
> **Al Ferris, Jackson, Miss.**
>
> **[Because they use science to a degree never before attempted by police. Every criminal is not only finger-printed, but has his voiceprint (tell-tale vocal pattern, which is just as distinct), the invisible aura surrounding his body, his brain-wave pattern, and other facts, recorded. There are a dozen ways to identify a wanted man, and the special devices used by the Science Police can pick him out of a crowd of thousands with unerring accuracy. They also have analytic devices which can tell exactly where a bit of dust originated—pinpointing not only the planet, but the area—usually within a few miles of the spot. Crooks don't have an easy time of it in the 30th Century. —Ed.]**

This was my first exposure to the concept of voice-printing, and I'm certain it was for others, too. I didn't realize until years later that the aura involved might be the Kirlian Aura. Of course, with some maturity and objective distance separating myself and my first reading of that letter in December 1966, I can see some of its Big Brotherish overtones. Nevertheless, it was the result of a respect and a rapport between editorial staff and readers.

Take this letter from **Adventure** #328:

> **You've stated that Supergirl and Superboy need secret identities to protect their families. But the Legionnaires can't have secret identities because they spend much of their time in the clubhouse and sometimes go on month-long missions. Please explain how they protect their relatives in a down-to-earth way.**
>
> **Jere Link, Mobile, Ala.**
>
> **[Some of the Legionnaires, such as Element Lad, are orphans. But the rest have equipped their parents' homes with warning devices similar to those used in the Legion Clubhouse. —Ed.]**

How about this one from **Adventure** #332:

> **. . . I can't believe you could get 20 Legionnaires, plus trophy rooms, library, etc., into that one small clubhouse.**
>
> **Richard Banda, Jr., Los Angeles, Cal.**
>
> **[We couldn't—if the clubhouse consisted of just what can be seen from outside. But beneath the land on which it is built are vast underground chambers. Thus the clubhouse is like an iceberg—only a small portion is visible on the surface. —Ed.]**

What was happening is this: As the strip continued to run and as the strip attracted letters, Weisinger and his readers were shaping the Legion together. He listened to what they said, and was a good enough editor—and marketer, I suppose—to put the promising suggestions to use. And he was smart enough to recognize when one of his readers had the makings of a comics professional. Nelson Bridwell, who complimented "The Super-Sacrifice of the Legionnaires," in **Adventure** #315, went on to become Weisinger's assistant and a Legion writer of considerable repute. Cary Bates had a letter published in **Adventure** #332, and he went on to become a Legion writer of . . . well, some kind of repute, anyway. Another future DC writer, Bob Rozakis, popped up in **Adventure** letter column with two letters. Typically, one was a boo-boo letter, but the other was par for the letter column. It is to Bob Rozakis we owe the discovery of . . . well, according to him, it was like this:

> **I was looking through my copy of the Columbia Viking Desk Encyclopedia, and I found this definition: Monel metal, a silvery white alloy. It is strong, durable, and resists acid! Not only does it have the same name, but the description contains the characteristics of someone we know.**

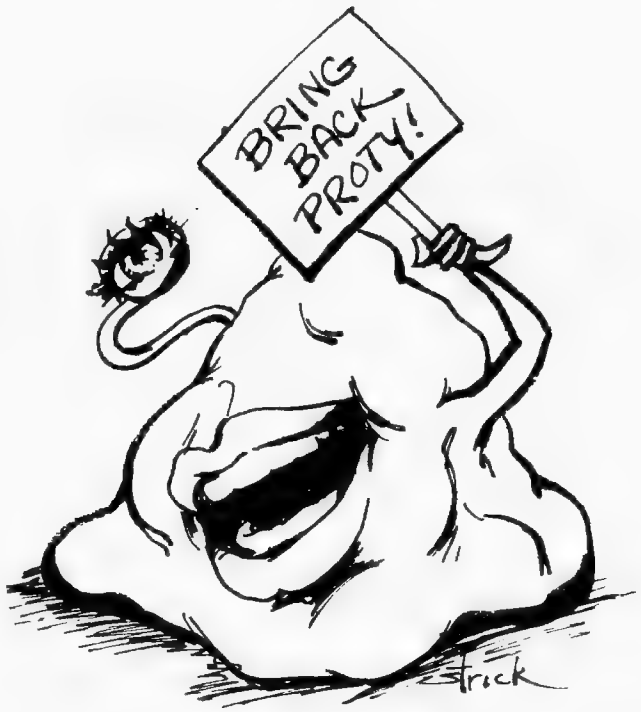
That gem is from **Adventure** #321. Some letters caused all sorts of problems. For instance, Barney Palmatier of Santa Monica, Calif., in **Adventure** #316 wondered whether Lightning Lad should be a Legionnaire after having killed Zaryan the Conqueror. "It is against the Code (of the Legion)," wrote Weisinger, "to destroy life ruthlessly, or in a wanton manner. It is not against the Code to destroy life in self-defense." Later on, Weisinger had to eat those words after the Star Boy expulsion story in **Adventure** #342. Then again, perhaps Zaryan didn't perish at all, in which case the whole question is moot. One day, a Legion writer just might deal with that question.

Weisinger announced plans for stories that sounded promising but never saw print. "Will Lana Lang ever go into the future and meet up with the Legion of Super-Heroes," asked Laura Schorr of Westfield, N.J., in **Adventure** #301. Lana had already met the Legionnaires once, and a reunion between her and Lightning Lad was promised "very shortly." On those occasions when Lana did have an adventure with the Legionnaires, Lightning Lad must have been on the other side of the universe.

In **Adventure** #347, Terri Balfour of Yuma, Ariz., asked where the Legionnaires got their costumes. "They must have one whale of a fashion designer," she noted. Weisinger agreed, saying she had "sparked" an idea for a "terrific" story—that never appeared.

Of course, there's the all-time favorite promise that will never be delivered in any of our lifetimes: Weisinger's rhetorical response to Tom Homey of Grand Ledge, Mich. Homey had said that he didn't want to see too many Legionnaires in a story, and Weisinger wanted to know what to do then about Shooter's idea for a story pitting all the Legionnaires against all the villains they'd ever faced! While that story has an intrinsic appeal, it would probably be the story that caused whatever current Legion team might exist, right on down to the letterer and colorist, to leave comics altogether.

Quick! What Legionnaires will be members of the Adult Legion besides those we saw in **Adventure** #354-55? If you answered Chameleon Boy, Sun Boy, and Color Kid, it means you read the response to Helmut Welke's missive in **Adventure** #358. And, of course, you know that Superboy can't drink Mon-El's serum and have powers under a red sun because Ned Snively asked that very question in **Adventure** #333. In that same issue, Jerry Weissman of Providence, R.I., figured that Superboy had to be hypnotized to prevent learning about the future. We all know that the White Witch gave Dream Girl super-precognitive powers beyond those of most Naltorians because Charles Redick of Venice, Ga., asked in **Adventure** #359 why, all of a sudden, she could see more than a few days into the future. We know Superboy stopped attending Legion meetings when he started classes at Metropolis University because of Paul Sciortino's letter in **Adventure** #358; that Polar Boy was smaller than the other Legionnaires because he was younger (**Adventure** #324); that Legionnaires weren't expelled once they were over age 18 (**Adventure** #334); that Brainiac 5 has a "computer brain" (**Adventure** #315); that Proty II had



actually taught himself to speak (**Adventure** #325); and that the Legionnaires weren't paid for their crime-fighting services (**Adventure** #337)—a fact that was eventually contradicted in a later story.

For the most part, however, what was said in the letter column was just as canonical as what was within the panels. And that's one of the wonderful things about those old columns. Still, time has made some of the old letters ironic, if not pathetic. For instance, this one from **Adventure** #308:

> **I enjoy each one of your "Legion" stories, but I'm wondering what ever happened to Star Boy. He became a full-fledged member of the Super-Hero Club in ADVENTURE COMICS No. 282. How come we've never seen him since?**
>
> **Herman Cummings, Cleveland, Ohio**
>
> **[STAR BOY has been on "detached service" for the Legion on a mission of the utmost importance. You'll learn all about it in a future issue —Ed.]**

Of course, Weisinger and crew had probably forgotten about him—just like Tyroc, the other Legionnaire we've been told was on "detached duty," whom Paul Levitz chose to forget on purpose. It might be something to follow up on however—exactly what was Star Boy's detached service? Did Tyroc have a similar mission? How about Karate Kid, who wasn't seen for almost a year after *his* debut?

Here's another fun one:

> **Since the original Brainiac is a computer, he obviously does not age. And his body parts shouldn't wear out, because his intelligence warns him to replace them whenever necessary. Therefore, shouldn't he still exist in the 30th Century, to present a menace to the Legion?**
>
> **Tom Tattershall, Kansas City, Mo.**
>
> **[You're reasoning's fine, as far as it goes, Tom. But the story in which "Brainiac 5" joined the Legion also revealed how Brainiac is destined to perish in our own time . . . —Ed.]**

That was from **Adventure** #350. And as we've all been told recently, Brainiac journeyed into the Legion's time instead. Unless that's not Brainiac, or unless he faked his death for Superman, or unless he's the Time Trapper, or unless . . .

Here's an anonymous one from **Adventure** #324 which makes a statement, in part, about comic book readers:

> **When Bouncing Boy became skinny and lost his powers, I was sorry. I'm fat like Bouncing Boy used to be. Now there is nobody in the Legion who is fat. Before Bouncing Boy lost weight, I felt like I wasn't the only fat person in the world. Now I feel bad. Please make Bouncing Boy fat again.**

This next one's from **Adventure** #304. Ronald Berglund of Minneapolis, Minn., wrote:

> **In the Legion story about Bouncing Boy, you show him buying a bottle of soda pop which costs fifty cents. Isn't that kind of expensive?**
>
> **[Obviously, inflation during the coming centuries will have zoomed the price of soda pop. Besides, this soda pop was a special brand imported from another planet, hence the increased cost. —Ed.]**

It's interesting to think about—Weisinger sitting there, stretching his point—when I have paid 75¢ for a can of Dr Pepper. Half a buck is the going price now, in lots of places.

Of course, as proof of the longevity of the strip, I offer this next letter, from **Adventure** #309:

> **I think the Legion of Super-Heroes should be in the movies. If they do, here's who I think should play some of the roles:**
>
> **Cosmic Boy - Fabian**
> **Saturn Girl - Diane McBain**
> **Sun Boy - Tucker Smith**
> **Bouncing Boy - Tommy Kirk**
> **Mon-El - Rick Nelson**
> **Supergirl - Tuesday Weld**
> **Pete Ross - Troy Donahue**

So said Jeff Baker of Fort Worth, Texas. I don't even know who Tucker Smith *was*!

Probably the ultimate example of how interaction grew between the comics company and its fans through the letter column comes from a letter published years later, in **Superboy** #182:

> **Hey! Do you guys have something against the Legion of Super-Heroes? No, I'm not talking about the switch bit; I'm used to that. It's just that I realized, every time you switched the Legion, it was when the 400th issue was approaching. The Legion said farewell in Adventure #380, less than two years away from #400, then was taken out of Action only eight issues from the quadcentennial. With Superboy #200 coming up in June 1973, dollars to doughnuts they'll be switched again, probably in #199. The only excuse I'd accept from you then is that the LSH was getting its own mag.**

That particular letter was from some dimbulb in The Bronx, N.Y. The rest of the letter dealt with some obscure fan club or another. Editor Murray Boltinoff's reply to that letter was the following: ". . . If the Legion does catch on, as we hope it does, nothing will deter us from developing it into its own mag." That was the statement of an editor who didn't understand the strip's fans, who didn't understand the relationship that existed between Mort Weisinger, Nelson Bridwell and their correspondents . . . and we won that battle, anyway.

I suppose people like Guy Lillian, Martin Pasko, Juan Cole, *et al.*, could go on *ad infinitum* about the atmosphere that existed in old Julius Schwartz letter columns. I wager too, Peter Sanderson and Tony Isabella and Dean Mullaney could argue that Marvel's No-Prizes turned those letter columns into a forum for meaningful discussions. But whatever those people may have thought about readers who counted the number of panels each Legionnaire appeared in . . . give me those old **Adventure** letter columns any time.

No! No! No! No More Adult Legion Stories!

By CAROL A. STRICKLAND

The death penalty ought to be revived for jerks who reveal the "whodunit" of a mystery story. Why, then, do decent, law-abiding fans put up with issues like **Adventure** #354-55? This two-part story blabbed the ending of the Legion's own whodunit. It was the first and only full-length Adult Legion story ever, an in-depth look at how the teenagers we read about today will turn out in their mature years.

Previous to this story, there had been other glimpses of the Adult Legion, but no more than a couple of stray panels had ever depicted any more than a few members of the Adult Legion saving Superman from the vengeance of an adult Legion of Super-Villains, or providing a target for Supergirl's matchmaking for her cousin. Such appearances, when the least bit lengthy, were forgettable, and when brief, ambiguous. (Among them: **Superman** #213, in which the adult Brainiac 5 refers to the White Witch as "[one] of our Legion buddies," an inference that might either suggest that she was destined to become a member of the Legion, or that might just as easily leave her on the sidelines as a Legion friend and ally, with no other official association.)

But then came **Adventure** #354-55. From this story we learned that Lone Wolf would join the Legion as Timber Wolf, and that Chemical King would not only join the Legion, but die preventing World War VII. Neither event had taken place by that point in the regular series. We first glimpsed Shadow Woman/Lass (in whiteface) as a statue displayed in a hall devoted to Legionnaires killed in action. We saw members-to-be who have since popped up as minor characters in Legion stories. Marriages were noted, among them those of Saturn Girl and Lightning Lad, and Bouncing Boy and Duo Damsel. Again, these events had not yet taken place in the actual Legion stories.

In addition, the Adult Legion story previewed the changes in the Legion's roll call: Mon-El, Colossal Boy and Matter-Eater Lad were out; Polar Boy and some unspecified Substitute Heroes were in, with *choke* Lex Luthor's and Mxyzptlk's Thirtieth Century descendants joining by the end of the story.

Sure enough, in the years that followed, Imra did indeed marry Garth, Luornu did marry Chuck, Chemical King died, Shadow Lass joined, Quantum Queen appeared, etc. etc. We could safely say that almost everything of importance that would happen to the Legion over the next decade and a half was foreshadowed or revealed in that story.

This is a great idea, some Legion fans declare. Now we can look forward to some of those exciting events, like marriages, kids, losses of powers, deaths and all the great adventures that accompany such happenings.

But I disagree. I always like to be surprised. I hate knowing that the butler will be the one who done it. I hat hate knowing that, no matter how powerful the threat facing Shrinking Violet or Bouncing Boy, they'll come through alive because—and only because—they were in the Adult Legion.

Frankly, I prefer the drama created by uncertainty.

It is my fervent hope that in the near future some Legion writer will get tired of sitting in his corner while the painted floor that surrounds him remains wet; he'll say, "To hell with the Adult Legion!" and deliberately insert a scene into a story in which Shrinking Violet dumps Duplicate Boy in favor of Cosmic Boy, or Shadow Lass battles at the Science Asteroid and flies away quite alive and victorious, or Matter-Eater Lad dies, having never regained his sanity, much less his political position on his homeworld.

Is it that much of a crime to label the Adult Legion story "imaginary" or, to use the 1980s term, a "possible future"? (For in an infinite Omniverse, all things, even the imaginary, are possible.) To be sure, a writer should feel free to utilize any interesting aspects of the Adult Legion story that would add to the Legion legend, but neither should he feel constrained by the limits imposed by that story and the destinies chronicled therein.

So you out there—stop it! Stop feeling so smug when you see your favorite hero threatened. Stop saying, "Oh, I know he'll be all right because he was alive in the ADULT LEGION STORY! Stop treating it as if it were gospel. And let the Legionnaires be free to tackle their destinies in whatever way the cosmic forces (and their writers) decree.

Yes! Yes! Yes! Why NOT More Adult Legion Stories?

By KEN GALE

I really can't understand what anyone has against the Adult Legion story. Knowing that it's been established that Cosmic Boy isn't going to die in the next issue of **Legion of Super-Heroes** is surely no different than knowing with equal certainty that Spider-Man or Green Lantern won't die in any of their next appearances. And knowing that present Legion intimates will get married is no more unsuspenseful than knowing that Sue Storm and Reed Richards, or Ray Palmer and Jean Loring would eventually marry. To suggest that one Adult Legion story can lay out all of the dramatic groundwork for the next 15 years is rather presumptuous, to say the least.

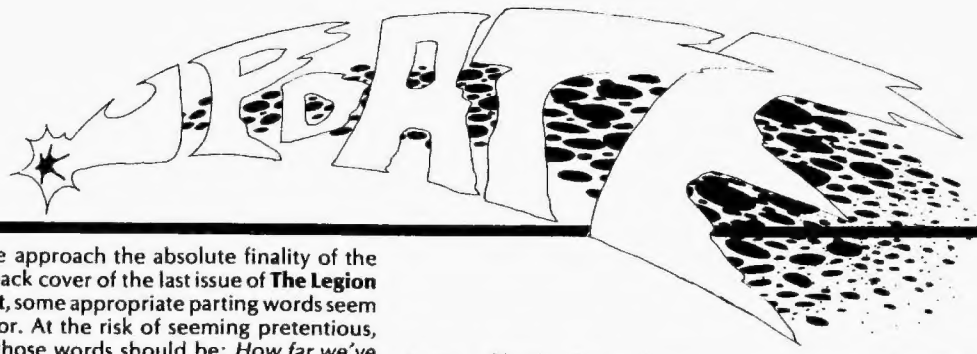
There's a natural curiousity to want to know what somebody will be like in ten years or so. Very few comics series have the means to deal with its characters' future. At the hand of a good writer, Adult Legion stories can be used not just to give the reader something to anticipate, but to involve him with a much grander, ongoing saga than any other series could ever suggest.

The depiction of Mon-El's future life (shown in all of three panels in **Adventure** #354) has been the topic of more discussion than any other given three-panel sequence could ever hope to fuel. The development of Mon-El as a solitary man again, out in space—not unlike being back in the Phantom Zone—has sparked much conjecture. Consensus (and Jim Shooter's stated intention) is that Mon-El would leave Earth and the Legion soon after Shadow Lass died on the Science Asteroid; he couldn't stand being in the Legion any more and went to make the universe safe by himself, alone. That says a lot about Mon-El.

There was no drama in the telling of Chemical King's death because he died in a badly structured, undramatic story, not because the Adult Legion story ruined the suspense. We hadn't seen Condo Arlik for two years; then, out of the blue, he showed up feeling suicidal and screaming, "I'm no good to anyone!" In a story written in so obvious and unsubtle a manner, his death would have been no more exciting *without* its having been foreshadowed. A better writer could have turned his readers' knowledge of Chemical King's fate to the story's *advantage*. If Chem had prevented World War VII and had not died right away, what a surprise *that* would have been . . . a surprised *generated* by the foreshadowing. It would also have given the character more opportunity for exposure and depth, so that his death, when it finally did come, would have more meaning and emotional impact.

Regrettably, since the Adult Legion story appeared, many Legion writers have used developments foreshadowed in that story instead of making the effort to come up with their own ideas. But the established future of the Adult Legion also prevents writers from just killing off any characters, those who were definitely destined to live, when they can't think of a real plot.

The Adult Legion story is not an evil itself; the evil is in its abuse. And the abuse of any plot device, whatever it may be, is what's detrimental to a series development. I'm not against Adult Legion stories. It really shouldn't make any difference, since the Legion of Super-Heroes is so rich in story material with or without them.



By JAY L. ZILBER

As we approach the absolute finality of the inside back cover of the last issue of **The Legion Outpost**, some appropriate parting words seem called for. At the risk of seeming pretentious, I'd say those words should be: *How far we've come, friends.*

If you weren't around to witness the **Outpost**'s humble beginnings in 1972, you can't possibly imagine how incredibly far we've all come. Certainly, the **Outpost** itself underwent a dramatic evolution in the three years—from 1972 to 1975—during which it was published on a regular basis. Those of you who *did* read those now-rare early issues will surely notice how that evolution has continued with the volume you now hold in your hands.

Still, each of those nine preceding issues impresses me just as much today as they did when I first pulled them out of their mailing envelope. And this can't be chalked up just to the fond nostalgic feelings that come of being an active contributor to those issues (though I freely admit that I've ressurected the "Update" title of my former comics review column for no other reason than that). The important, truly amazing thing was that those issues were written, drawn and assembled by a bunch of kids . . . teenagers who knew next to nothing about the logistics of producing and distributing a magazine, and whose familiarity with fandom and the fan press *began* with the publication of their first fanzine. And yet, insofar as the comics field is concerned, we made—or at the very least, we changed the course of history. Not bad for a bunch of punky li'l kids.

Of course, the **Outpost** was just one of countless *hundreds* of fanzines that have come and gone during the 20-odd years since comics fandom has been "organized" and documented by its fan press. Neither was ours the only fanzine ever to have a significant impact on the comics field; a huge percentage of people who work in the field professionally can trace their start to an involvement with fanzines. New Legion scripter Roy Thomas played a pivotal role in founding some of the earliest fanzines of the 1960s, as did the Legion's present, unofficial editorial overseer Len Wein in the mid and late '60s, as did former LSH scripter Paul Levitz in the early 1970s. The **Outpost** was one of a noble but common breed of medium-budget, modest-scale fanzines, through which its contrbutors learned the craft of visual and verbal communication, some of whom later chose to pursue that field as professionals.

But while the **Outpost** evolved and its contributors grew with it, there was another, more subtle evolution taking place around us, the effects of which are only obvious now, as we enter the 1980s. How far we've come, indeed.

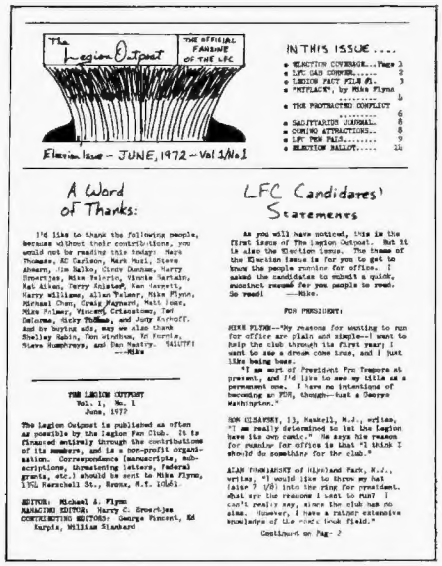
Fanzines such as the **Outpost**, in its original incarnation, were never particularly easy to stumble across. One had to make a concerted effort to "find" fandom in those days, for there were no reliable procedures for fan publishers to promote and distribute their projects to the widest possible interested audience. But among the crop that was available to the ambitious fanzine hunter, unassuming, modest fanzines like the **Outpost** were not uncommon at all. In contrast, they seem to be *bloody* hard to come by nowadays. I'm talking about the kind of fanzine which starts, like ours did, with a bunch of kids getting together, pooling their resources and talents, to put out a fanzine for the fun of it, with no greater goal than the sheer enjoyment of sharing information and opinions among friends who cater to the same common interests. The successful slick, semi-professional trade magazines, such as **The Comics Journal**, **Media Showcase**, **Comics Feature**, **Mediascene**'s revamping as **Prevue**, and many other recent imitators, have all redressed the fan press with a flashy, professional, sophisticated look. These magazines—the term "fanzine" no longer seems to apply here—have certainly helped to expand the boundaries of organized fandom with their widespread distribution. And they have set new, higher standards of quality in the fan press, which is not in itself a bad thing to have happened. But as a side effect, they also appear to have overshadowed and crowded out the vital medium-budget, modest-scale fanzines of the sort that was once the very backbone of fandom. I'm not sure that the tradeoff is a balanced one.

These comics-oriented trade magazines give the impression that every would-be fan publisher should necessarily strive to attain the same common goals, the same enormous scale and status as the semi-professional slicks. They imply by their very proliferation (if not by their explict editorial philosophy) that smaller-scale fanzines can no longer be valid or worthwhile as ends in themselves. This new crop of slickzines, geared more or less toward thought-provoking communication, is assuredly a step ahead of the slick artzine portfolios that flourished some years ago. But as they strive to reach wider and wider mass audiences, the new slicks fall victim to the same blanderizing effects, the same lowest-common-denominator mass communication factors of which the slickzines themselves are often critical when they appear in the comics, film and literature. The slicks are published not by fans, for fans, but by fan-spawned *companies*, as business enterprises. They are very much alike and increasingly interchangeable. They headline the same media news, review the same books, interview the same people, and they come in the same package and format, on the same unrelenting monthly schedule. They have the same advertisers, and, very often, draw their contributors from the same closed circles of friends and associates. They must surely make the fan press seem very intimidating to the would-be newcomer, who has no other resources than his typewriter, a mimeo machine, and a couple of enthusiastic friends who want to draw and write about comics.

As we began to think about how this issue of the **Outpost** would be distributed, we found ourselves torn between two nearly incompatible choices: We wanted very much to keep the **Outpost** true to its roots, its original modest goals; at the same time, we couldn't completely ignore the way the fan press has evolved in the past five years. Fanzine distribution, through comics specialty shops and outlets, is a Very Big Racket now, and distributors insist not just on a certain level of subjective quality, but certain specific, convenient standard formats as well. As they compete on stands and racks for the buyers' attention—a new experience for *fanzines*—eye-catching color covers are becoming more and more the rule rather than the conspicuous exception they once were. Professional contributors, "name" artists and writers who are already successful in the comics field and have a sizeable following, are increasingly important to fanzine sales promotion. This trend strikes me as being at cross purposes with the *real* fan press, which (I was always under the impression) exists to promote and provide outlets for the talents *within* fandom itself. More fanzine publishers than ever before are eking out a living on their publishing projects alone, whereas five years ago you could count the number of such "professional fan" publishers on one finger. I hesitate to make any value judgements, but I can't help wondering, if all of us were just now getting involved in fandom and amateur publishing for the first time, how very different the **Outpost** would be.

We can modestly admit that this issue is more professional-looking, better written, better edited, better assembled than our nine prior efforts. It *had* to have been done better; we're all five years further along in the maturation process as artists, writers, and editors, having learned and grown from past successes and failures in our various individual pursuits since we last met under the **Outpost** logo. Nonetheless, we'd like to think that this issue still qualifies as a continuation of that grand, endangered tradition of fanzines done for the sheer pleasure of sharing information and opinions about a common interest. Now, more than ever before, the fan press needs to encourage would-be publishers not to get sucked into the slickzine trap. There's nothing at all wrong with publishing a modest little, marginally unprofitable zine, or a readership of only a few hundred enthusiastic followers of a relatively esoteric common interest like the Legion of Super-Heroes. By golly, we're *proud* of what we've accomplished here.

Fanzine publishing is not so easy that just anybody can shake the comics industry's socks off with everything they publish. But here's hoping that you folks will never stop trying.


The Legion Outpost
THE OFFICIAL FANZINE OF THE LFC
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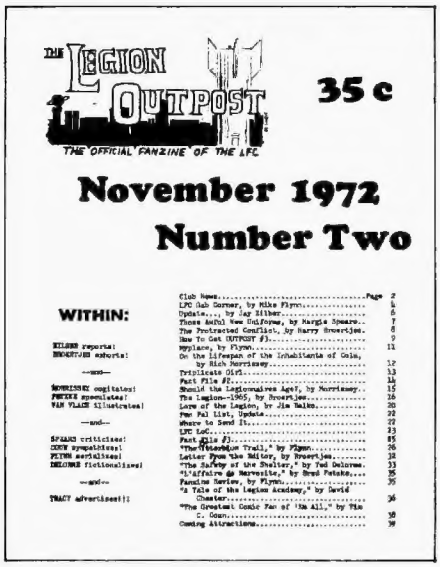
LFC Candidates' Statements
THE LEGION OUTPOST
Vol. 1, No. 1
June, 1972
EDITOR: Michael A. Flynn
MANAGING EDITOR: Harry C. Broerjan

The Legion Outpost #1
June, 1972


THE LEGION OUTPOST
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"THE OFFICIAL FANZINE" OF THE LFC
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WITHIN:

The Legion Outpost #2
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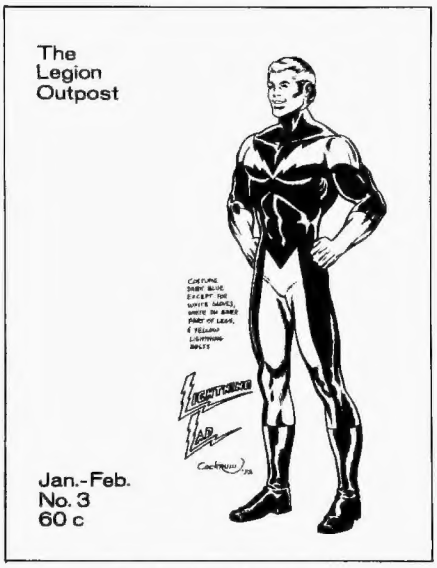
The Legion Outpost
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The Legion Outpost #3
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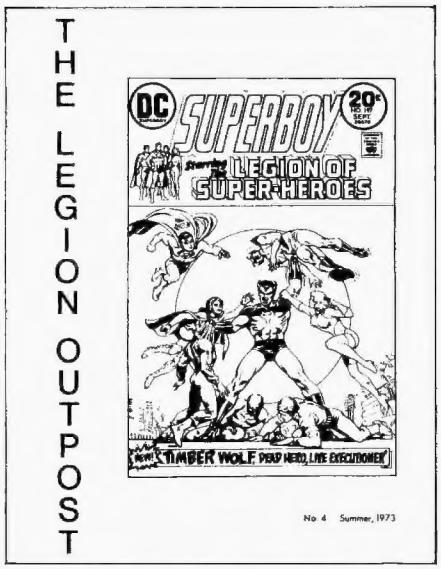
THE LEGION OUTPOST
DC SUPERBOY 20¢
Starring LEGION OF SUPER-HEROES
NEW! TIMBER WOLF PRAY NEED, LIVE EXECUTIONER!
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THE LEGION OUTPOST
NIGHT GIRL
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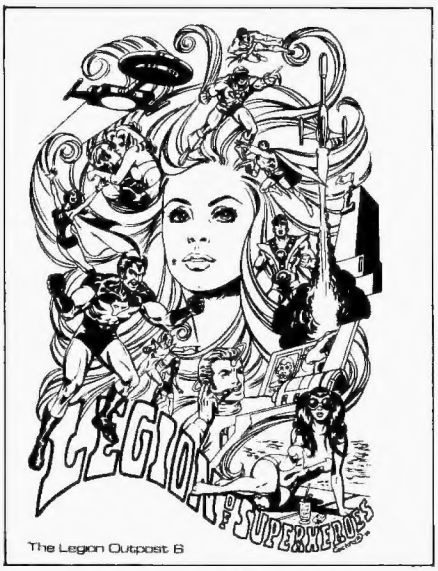
LEGION OF SUPER-HEROES
The Legion Outpost 6

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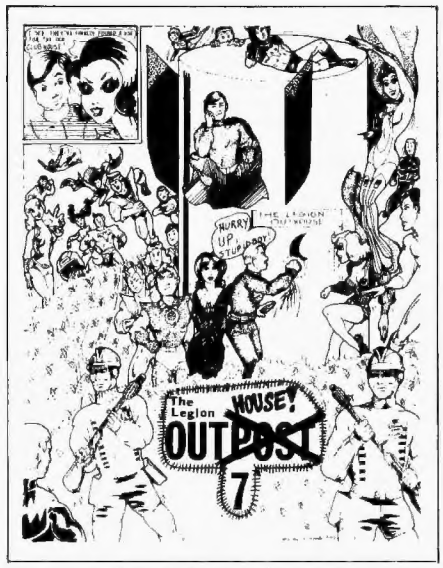
HURRY UP, STUPID!
The Legion HOUSE!
OUTPOST 7

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Spring, 1974

The Legion Outpost

The Legion Outpost #8
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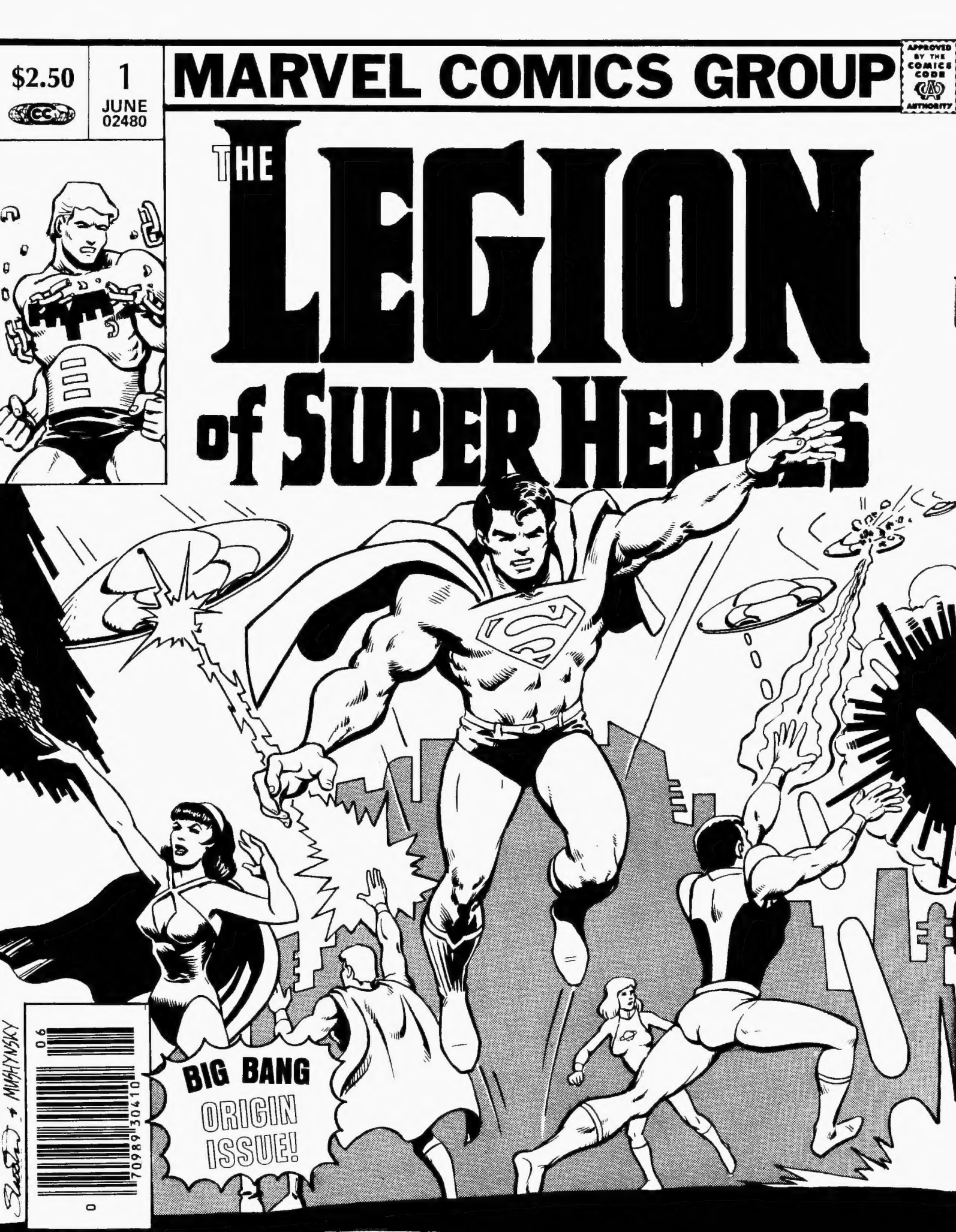
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